Nucla students help neighbor in need
High school youths help build wheelchair ramp

While most students spend spring break catching up on Zumba and their favorite TV shows, six Nucla High School students woke up early recently and set out to build a much-needed wheelchair ramp for a local resident.

It was done through Tri-County Health Network’s (TCHNetwork) Bridging Generations Project.

To ensure the students learned how to measure out and cut wood with a circular saw, plan out appropriate spacing between screws, determine how much concrete is needed to secure the posts in place, survey posts together with the proper length, screws, determine the angle of the ramp and much more.

When asked what their motivation for volunteering was, the students indicated they felt passionate about the cause, and wanted to give back to the community and neighbors they love. Chrystee Joseph said she volunteered “to give back to those in need, and it’s also really fun to learn about the process such as the different wood cuts that go into constructing a ramp.”

Her classmate, Cadilyn Litzy-kjolm, added, “I’m learning a lot about the construction process, how it’s all put together as a team to help others,” she said.

TCHNetwork has supported the project every step of the way.

“We want to give students unique opportuni-
ties to learn. Collaborating with local businesses and nonprofits to give students real-life experien-
ces and a chance to give back is a priority for us,” TCHNetwork principal Clint Wytzuk said. “Some students learn from textbooks, and others learn kinesthe-
ically, such as by finding the horizontal displacement measurement necessary for a ramp to be built with angles that are up to code.”

Last spring, NHS is giving classroom credi-
to students for their pursuits – credit that can go to a variety of subjects.

Lo Spina, a retired engineering department manager in the aerospace industry and active member of the West End Public School Board of Directors, donated his time, effort, and tools to play a crucial role in the building of this ramp.

He started volunteering monthly, making mea-
surements at the wheelchair ramp recipient’s home and creating the complicated blueprint for the ramp.

He picked up the supplies donated to TCHNetwork from Home Depot stores in Grand Junction and Montrose, and offered up his home to be the initial construction site.

In addition, he shared his knowledge of wood-
working and his drive to give back to his communi-
ty to the Nucla High School volunteers.

The project was initially met with two responses to a TCHNetwork employer’s concern for individuals who know the need in the need in the need in the need in the need for wheelchair ramps, and financial limitations (such ramp costs upwards of $1,000 for just the supplies).

The West End community came together with TCHNetwork to start constructing ramps. Spina independently built two ramps before partnering with TCHNetwork and NHS on the current ramp. Spina said he truly believes that the high school students added a special element to the project.

“Seeing the different generations come together to make a difference is really something. I’m proud of this work the students have accomplished on their own, but they didn’t hesitate to jump right in and get their hands dirty,” he said.

The ramp will be installed at the dif-
ferent parts of the ramp that the volunteers con-
structed at the client’s home. After the ramps are con-
structed, TCHNetwork will continue to work to improve the health and wellbeing of West End community residents with limited mobility by building additional ramps with the support of vol-
unteers and donated supplies.

Formed in 2009, TCHNetwork is comprised of a group of healthcare providers in southwest Colorado within the counties of Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel that are committed to improving the quality and coordination of health care services in this tri-county region by increas-
ing access to healthcare and improving health outcomes.

In 2016, TCHNetwork opened a new location at the West End Economic Development Corporation building, 618 E Star Ct • Montrose. For more information, visit: www.tchnetwork.org.

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