



Christmas comes early in volunteer effort

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Mike Sanchez and Dwight Warlick of Northwest Construction dig into Elaine Collings's roof.

Written by [Brad Kadrich](#)
Observer Staff Writer

With only her Social [Security](#) and a little bit of savings to work with, Elaine Collings knew the roof on her Canton home wasn't going to be fixed any time soon.

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So when her son saw something about Christmas in Action on the Canton Township website, a little ray of sunshine snuck in between the raindrops in her leaking roof.

And when a Christmas in Action representative stopped by her home a couple of weeks ago, he had good news.

"They came by two weeks ago and said, 'Elaine, you're getting a new roof,'" Collings recalled Saturday, while watching a volunteer crew remove and replace her aging roof. "I said, 'God love you.' All I had was my Social Security and my



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Lori Shaffer, from Calvary Baptist Church, tapes off a bedroom wall prior to painting during her Christmas in Action volunteer effort Sunday.

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savings. I would have had to wait until it actually started leaking before I could have done anything.”

Christmas in Action, a nonprofit agency that works to preserve and revitalize houses in an effort to help low-income elderly and disabled homeowners, took care of the problem for her.

Spring cleaning

Knowledgeable volunteer experts perform electrical, plumbing, heating and roofing repairs, while teams of other volunteers paint walls, wash windows, and do general interior and exterior spring cleaning.

Local businesses such as Home Depot, Monroe Bank & Trust and RepairClinic.com donate services, merchandise, expertise and volunteers to help make it happen.

“We couldn't do it without them,” said volunteer coordinator Paula Kosbe, who helped wrangle the efforts of more than 200 volunteers to work at a dozen homes. “Without their generosity, this could not be done.”

RepairClinic volunteers, participating in Christmas in Action for the second time, fixed appliances, did roofing and exterior repairs, painting and cleaning projects. The company's participation is led by RepairClinic Outreach, a group of employees dedicated to making a positive impact, locally and nationally.

“For us, it's a Saturday very well spent,” said Joey Gagnon, a RepairClinic vice president. “We're grateful to Christmas in Action of Wayne County for the opportunity to put our skills to use to help those who need it most in the Canton community.”

Helping hand

Bill Dunphy, a retiree who also does work for Habitat for Humanity, was a team captain on a Canton home where volunteers were ripping out bathroom tile, installing a new door in a bedroom and tearing out carpet for the homeowner, who was recently confined to a wheelchair.

Dunphy said Christmas in Action and Habitat for Humanity are similar efforts in that they're designed simply to help people.

“From that aspect, we're helping those who are less fortunate than us,” said Dunphy, who led one of the larger teams Saturday. “We're helping those who can't quite make it. You have to pay it back.”



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