



CITY OF TEMPLE TERRACE NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Two pages)

HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM TOUCHES LIVES

TEMPLE TERRACE, FL. – (3/8/10) – Zulema Correa’s home was in shambles, her health deteriorating, and her hopes for the future increasingly bleak. The day the ceiling in her home finally caved in, she was left in a pool of rain ... and tears.

She couldn’t afford to fix the roof, much less all the other problems with her house. But one day, she said, she stumbled across an article about the *Temple Terrace Housing Rehabilitation Program*.

The program provides funds to repair older homes and bring them up to current code requirements. To qualify, homeowners must live in Temple Terrace and meet other criteria, including income thresholds. There are no application fees and no out-of-pocket expenses to the homeowner. The program is funded through a Hillsborough County Community Development Block Grant in connection with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is administered locally by the Risk Reduction/Housing Compliance Division of the Temple Terrace Fire Department.

For some homeowners, the program provides just what they need to get their house back in shape. For others, the program is nothing less than a miracle come true.

“At 80-years old, I think I’m beginning to live again,” said Correa, a sprightly grandmother with a fondness for baseball and homemade flan. Correa said she now realizes her health problems were caused by the mold and mildew in her home.

Construction workers discovered massive amounts of mold and mildew behind the walls and in the ceiling. There was a leak in the ceiling that Correa knew nothing about.

“I had mold from one end of the house to the other,” she said. “No wonder I couldn’t breathe. This house was killing me.”

Under the City’s housing rehabilitation program, workers brought Correa’s home back to life, rewiring the electrical system, replacing the plumbing, building a new roof and ceiling, installing a new central heat and air handler. They added fresh paint, new carpet, new bathroom tile and more.

Since the City's program began, approximately 100 households have undergone significant improvements to their homes, said housing rehabilitation specialist Wayne Smith. Most rehabs are in the \$20,000 to \$40,000 range, Smith said, though some can go higher. On March 2, the Temple Terrace City Council approved more than \$232,000 in program funding for the 2010 fiscal year.

That's great news for a community like Temple Terrace, where many of the houses were built a half-century ago.

"Temple Terrace was built up really fast in the 1950s, so many of the houses are old. They're starting to wear out," Smith said. "We've got [plumbing] leaks all over Temple Terrace."

The problem only grows worse for elderly homeowners on fixed incomes, who can't afford repairs. But in many ways, the housing rehabilitation program is about more than just fixing light sockets and leaky pipes. It's about the quality of people's lives, said deputy housing official Gail Garnier.

"Many of these come with many, many stories," she said. "It's a little program, but with a major impact."

Just ask Zulema Correa.

To inquire about the Temple Terrace Housing Rehabilitation Program or to obtain an application, please call (813) 506-6696.

Reporters interested in interviewing Zulema Correa for a story should contact Temple Terrace PIO Michael Dunn at (813) 506-6406 to make arrangements.

Housing rehabilitation programs also are available in Tampa, Plant City and Hillsborough County. Call the numbers listed below for information.

Tampa: Mary Jenkins at (813) 274-7954

Hillsborough County (and Plant City): Judy Jones at (813) 635-8134

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