

### American Legion Post 36

The American Legion's mission statement is, "To enhance the well-being of America's veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by our devotion to mutual helpfulness." Local American Legion Post 36 took this statement and went above and beyond with their mission. With help from local groups, Post 36 started a fund that allows them to give grants to adapt veterans' houses for ADA accessibility.

This admirable program is not new to the area, as the Rochester Lions Club once used to build ramps for all those in need of one. Over time, the club had to slow down as members aged to the extent they could not safely build anymore. However, members of the community still had a need for the program.

The American Legion felt it was necessary to carry on this program, but in their own way. Casi Cowles of the American Legion Auxiliary was inspired by the previous program and came up with the idea to focus the service on veterans of the community. As Executive Director of the Planning Commission, Casi witnessed firsthand the need of the program from people in the community. After proposing her idea to Gene Maners and Bob Goodman, both affiliated with American Legion, the two instantly jumped on board of the idea.

With heavy support from the community, it was not long before the American Legion had its first applicant, Mr. Shippey of Kewanna. On dialysis and requiring a gurney everyday made Mr. Shippey's living conditions difficult. His family was ecstatic to hear there may finally be a solution through the legion's program. Only a day after applying, the building of a new ramp was started at Mr. Shippey's residence. His life and the life of his family has been forever changed through the program.

The American Legion strives to help as many veterans as they can with this new program. The grants are open to any veteran, regardless of membership in an organization. Additionally, unlike the previous program, Casi explains "it is not just ramps! We widen doorways, make bathrooms handicapped, expand pantries and closets, and install audible needs. Anything they may need."

The American Legion knew from the beginning they wanted their program to be established as a fund with the Community Foundation. Casi said, "[The Community Foundation] was a great way to ease everyone's mind so that not one veteran's organization was holding the money. A neutral holder was by far the best way to go." Additionally, anyone who wants to support veterans and this program's mission can contribute to the fund.