

Texas Ramp Project helps bring freedom to older adults and veterans

The project marks 40 years of building independence for Texans.

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AUSTIN, Texas — A few steps can feel like a mountain for people who rely on walkers or wheelchairs, but for volunteers with the Texas Ramp Project, those barriers can come down in just a few hours.

Since 1985, volunteers have built more than 30,000 ramps across Texas, giving older adults and people with disabilities safe access to their homes. The nonprofit estimates that most ramps cost between \$800 and \$900 to build and are provided at no cost to clients, thanks to donations from churches, community groups and local foundations.

Referrals typically come from health care workers who identify individuals struggling to navigate their own entryways. Randy Kerkman, the Austin Central Region Coordinator, says volunteers in Travis and Bastrop counties alone build roughly 100 to 115 ramps each year.

Kerkman said the people who receive the ramps are often overwhelmed with gratitude. “You can see it in their eyes—the freedom they have now to move in and out of their homes,” he said.

That feeling of freedom is something Air Force veteran Tom Cook understands well. The 86-year-old served 18 years and began having mobility issues that made stairs a daily challenge.

“It changed my life a whole lot because the ramp helps me out because I use a walker,” Cook said.

Cook’s ramp was built by a church group from Houston that brought all the materials and completed the project on-site in about six hours. The Texas Ramp Project says it has built five ramps for veterans like Cook this year.

With its 40th anniversary this year, the Texas Ramp Project continues to expand its reach, planning more builds through the end of 2025. A 10-county area around Austin is divided into five regional sectors: Austin Central, Austin North, Austin West, Austin East and Austin South—each coordinating volunteer teams and local projects.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhmcYtrBbAg>