

Builders volunteers come to the aid of one of their own

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GRAHAM—Grady Perryman is a Texans on Mission volunteer. He's certified in disaster relief, and he often takes part in Texans on Mission Builders projects. So, when Grady and his friends faced a challenge recently, other Texans on Mission volunteers came to their aid.

Grady, 31, is intellectually disabled and lives with his parents, Texans on Mission volunteers Jim and Debbie Perryman in Graham. They are members of First Baptist Church in Graham.

"He's a sweet, lovable kid," Jim Perryman said. "Everybody in town loves him."

Grady has trouble with intellectual skills, but he is very sociable, his dad said. Until recently, a state government-funded program provided Grady and others in Graham a place to gather, build their living skills and socialize.

In January 2024, the local service provider Grady and his friends had relied on stopped its "day habilitation" program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or IDD. Categorized by the state under "general funding," Grady's program was cut.

The nonprofit Arc of Wichita County came to the rescue in May by helping establish HERO House in Graham for teaching "life and work skills and social development through activities, classes and community outings," reported KAUZ news in Wichita Falls.

This would provide a new program in a temporary location for Grady and

others caught up in the state funding cut.

Graham residents Dennis and Andy Heath created a nonprofit called Graham Friends of The Arc to raise funds for a permanent location. The Graham group bought the former Modern Way grocery store building, and Texans on Mission volunteers kicked off renovations in November.



Grady Perryman helps carry materials for the HERO House build. (Photo / Texans on Mission / Jim Perryman)

The Texans on Mission group erected walls and roughed in the electrical wiring, Perryman said. And work continued this month tiling bathrooms, installing an emergency exit, painting walls and performing minor finishing touches on the 3,800-square-foot facility. Everything is up to American with Disabilities Act standards.

Texans on Mission volunteers stepped up to help the project move forward within the budget. The volunteer involvement “was very important because it reduced the cost of getting it started,” Perryman said.

When state funding ceased for the “day habilitation” program, it “affected a lot of disabled folks,” Perryman said. A number of Graham’s adults with intellectual disabilities “were left with few options for a productive life.”

Since the funding cuts excluded Grady from local programs, Jim noticed his son “sitting around the house and not doing much.” But the concern for the Perrymans went beyond their own son.

Debbie Perryman said these adults “thrive on being together, and the funding cuts left many of them isolated and alone. It also affected their caregivers.

“Single parents or caregivers no longer had someone to watch over their IDD adult, so that they themselves could go to the doctor, go to the grocery store or just take a break,” she said.

“The mental well-being of the IDD adults and the parents/caregivers suffered. It was an untenable situation.”

Community effort

The project has become a community effort. In November, owners of a local pizza restaurant that normally only handles pickup and delivery orders opened their doors to Texans on Mission volunteers and the HERO House members. During the time together, Wayne Pritchard, director of Texans on Mission Builders had an idea.

“There’s like 20 of these special needs adults there [at Pizza Hut], and so I just thought it would be cool if these guys could come and look at their new building,” Pritchard said, even though construction was unfinished.

“And so, I asked the lady who was in charge if they would like to do that. And I thought those kids were going to start crying. And the emotions were just flowing.”

The workers went back to HERO House and “cleaned up anything they might trip on or fall and get hurt on,” Pritchard said.



The HERO House in an earlier stage. Now down to minor finishing touches, everything in the 3,800-square-foot facility is up to ADA standards. (Photo / Texans on Mission / Jim Perryman)

The group arrived that day in a bus, and “they were just coming up and hugging on us and telling us thank you,” he recalled. “It was just an emotional roller coaster.”

As the clients prepared to leave, Pritchard went to the front door and said they could only get out on one condition—a hug. “And they just mobbed me, almost rolling me over.”

Pritchard shared the experience with deep emotions himself. He noted Grady has given all of the volunteers a family title. He is Uncle Wayne to Grady, and the other Texans on Mission workers are uncles, as well.

If all goes as planned, HERO House members will be able to vacate their

temporary location and move into their new facility the first part of March, Debbie said.

“The [Texans on Mission] Builders know they are welcome and will be expected to come back this year to see the finished project and join the members in celebration,” she said.