



INDIANAPOLIS

SEPTEMBER 2010

Angie's list®



HELPINGhands

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Making much-needed wishes come true

EXPERT ANSWERS

to member questions

We need help with squeaking floors. Our house is about 29 years old and has carpet over all the floors except the kitchen, foyer and some bathroom areas. The first and second floors have areas that squeak, and there seem to be more every day. What can I do about this problem?

— *Mary Jane Pfuetze*

The squeaks are caused by movement in the subfloor, says Allen Gindt, retail manager at A-rated flooring installer Blakley's in Indianapolis. "It could be due to the home settling over time, or the builder not using enough nails to secure the subfloor to the joist," Gindt says. Over time, nails become loose and the subfloor separates from the joists and rubs against the nails, causing squeaks. "The only way to stop it is to pull up the carpet and install screws or ring shank nails, which have a better grip, to secure the subfloor to the joists," he says. He estimates the work would likely cost \$500 in materials and labor at a minimum.

Monte Brown, a sales representative for A-rated Brothers Floor Covering in Indianapolis, agrees this approach is the best repair, but he also cautions that eliminating every squeak may not be possible. "A flooring guy can't guarantee you'll eliminate every squeak, because the joists themselves may start to squeak over time — you squeak when you get old," he says.

The existing carpet could be reused by restretching it after the repairs, but Gindt advises it may be best to wait until you replace the flooring, especially for hard floor coverings like hardwoods or vinyl. "The best time to make the repairs is when you replace it, so they can get into every little nook and cranny," he says. ☞



Do you have a service-related question?
E-mail us at mailbag@angieslist.com.

help ing HANDS

Companies give back
to communities here
and abroad

by Staci Giordullo

AS NATURAL DISASTERS and the economic crisis continue to affect so many, both individuals and businesses have stepped up to help neighbors in need. Last year, 63.4 million Americans volunteered — an increase of 1.6 million from 2008, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Benevolence is a priority for Angie's List members. More than 80 percent of those who responded to an online poll say it's important for service providers to give back to their communities.

Companies on the List understand and share this priority. Whether it's rebuilding an orphanage in Haiti, mentoring young adults in Baltimore or providing free construction work to families down on their luck, the women and men rated on Angie's List have some of the most generous hearts around. Here are just a few of their stories.

A hero in Haiti

“Need you terribly. Come as quick as you can.”

That was the message Tom Manassero, owner of A-rated Homepro Handyman Services in Oceanside, Calif., received from his brother, Bill, a missionary managing an orphanage and school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, after the January earthquake. According to the Haitian government, the 7.0 magnitude quake killed an estimated 230,000 people, injured 300,000 and left more than 1 million homeless.

Miraculously, at Lighthouse Orphanage, the most serious injury

of the 50 children who live there was a broken leg. “They were amazingly blessed,” Manassero says.

However, there was a significant amount of damage. Manassero knew his expertise in construction would be invaluable during the rebuilding process, but didn’t know where to begin. “We had no game plan,” he says. “We had to get funding. We didn’t know where we were going to stay or what we were going to eat, but we knew we had to go.”

After the Manasseros’ church raised money for their airfare, they flew to the Dominican Republic and took a 12-hour bus ride into Haiti. “We went straight to the orphanage and got to work,” Manassero says. “It was very emotional. I saw so much suffering, so much need.”

Manassero says training the older boys from the orphanage how to help with the reconstruction was just as important as the work itself. “I taught them how to do repair work — a trade so they could support themselves,” he says.

Having dropped everything to go to Haiti, Manassero knew his time there was limited. “I thought we could afford to be gone a month,” he says. But after word started to spread about his unselfish endeavor, several customers sent him checks to help cover the bills while he was away. “It kept happening,” he says. “And we knew we could stay for another month. And then another month.” The 2009 Super Service Award winner ended up staying



Photos courtesy of Tom Manassero | Tom Manassero and his wife, Nancy, spent three months in Haiti helping to rebuild (top). Manassero trained volunteers to help with the orphanage’s construction (bottom).



Photos courtesy of Tom Manassero | Some of the children at the orphanage resumed their schoolwork in temporary spaces, under the guidance of Nancy Manassero, until their new classrooms were completed (above). Tom and volunteers from Firefighters for Christ sit among the newly completed desks (below).

three months to help rebuild and plans to return to Haiti in the future.

Angie's List member Mary Lou Stringham of Escondido, Calif., considers Tom her "go-to" guy for handyman work and says she wasn't surprised to hear of the Manassero's trip to Haiti. "That kind of incredible generosity is exactly what one would expect of Tom and his wife, Nancy," she says. "Tom is an extraordinary worker, but more than that, he's an extraordinary person." Stringham says she gladly donated \$150 to support their trip. "It was the least I could do," she says. "It's money very well spent!"

Even though his work was amongst total devastation and the stench of rotting corpses buried beneath rubble, Manassero says daily prayer and the drive of the Haitian people kept him going. "They're very hardworking and prideful people," he says. "They don't like to ask. They'd show up at 6 a.m. with shovels and picks and work to sundown. It was amazing."

"I saw so much suffering, so much need."



A mentor with a mop

“There’s no real easy way to explain my company,” says Erica McCullough, owner of A-rated Living Legacy Development LLC in Baltimore. It may look like just another housecleaning service, but McCullough says her clients are really helping to fund a community service project.

“After hearing [McCullough’s] story, I was stunned,” says Angie’s List member Debbie Justice of Baltimore. Justice is referring to McCullough’s policy of only hiring high school and college-aged individuals, most of which come from disadvantaged circumstances but end up thriving under her watchful eye and encouraging manner.

After teaching in Baltimore for 10 years, McCullough started her Super Service Award winning company in 2007 when she heard of a former student’s murder and another who committed suicide to avoid joining a gang. “I knew I needed to do something to help these kids,” says the single mom, selecting housecleaning as her method of mentorship because of its small learning curve and the quick confidence boost it gives novice employees. “The Gap might not hire that person, but I will. The kids just want rules and boundaries.”

McCullough says for some of her “kids,” the \$10-an-hour paycheck is the only income supporting their family, but the goal is not for them to stay with her forever. “I like to give them away to better jobs or internships,” she says. “We’ve sent 20 kids to college so far. And by ‘we’ I mean myself and the other children using positive peer pressure or help with applications — whatever it takes.”

Jessica Holmes worked for McCullough for two years and says although she initially was skeptical of the job, she quickly came to appreciate Erica’s work ethic. “She taught me to not be afraid to try new things,” says Holmes, who’s now enrolled in community college. “I used to be afraid and have anxiety attacks, but she helped me with my confidence. She helped me with life.”

Baltimore-area Angie’s List members rave about the thorough cleaning service and support McCullough in her undertaking.



Photo by Daria Johnson | Company owner Erica McCullough says her clients are helping to fund a community service project.



Photo by Daria Johnson | Christin Savage (front) and Morgan Smith gather supplies before beginning their work at Living Legacy Development LLC in Baltimore.

“They found and removed dirt that I didn’t even know was there,” Mary Sykes says. “We are all products of our neighborhoods, whether we acknowledge it or not. Erica has decided to help create the kind of community she wants to live in, and I want to support that dream.”

Justice agrees, and says hiring Living Legacy is worth well more than what she pays. “One hears stories of these kids who fall through the cracks,” she says. “To meet this woman who’s trying to take these issues head on ... it’s so impressive.”

McCullough is the first to brush away any commendation but tears up when discussing the pride she has for her employees. “I’m not saying I’m Mother Teresa — nowhere close,” she says. “But the kids tell me they know if there’s one person in the world that loves them, it’s me. When I give a child away knowing they’re fully prepared, those are my proudest moments.”

“I’m not saying I’m Mother Teresa — nowhere close.”



Champions of the Gulf

Hoping to help clean up the Gulf Coast oil spill, thousands of pet groomers and salons across the country sent shorn hair to 19 coastal warehouses operated by Matter of Trust, an ecological charity. “I’m an environmentalist, and this is something I care a lot about,” says Cecilia Miller, office manager for highly rated Mutt Hutt Inc. in Chicago.

A highly rated business nearby, Roots Hair Salon, joined forces and donated its human hair. About 60 pounds have been sent between the two, Miller says.

Dwana Williams, director of marketing in Louisiana and Mississippi for the Sport Clips franchise, says managers and customers at many of their 700 stores jumped at the chance to contribute. “It makes people feel good to know

a simple haircut could possibly help with the situation,” Williams says.

ION Studio, a highly rated hair salon in New York City, has also donated about 60 pounds of hair. “We put a lot of emphasis on environmental sustainability here,” says Naomi Knights, color education director. ION only uses all-natural products. “Our clients just love it. They want to help.”

Hair is hydrophobic — it repels water while absorbing oil — making it ideal for oceanic spills. Thousands of volunteers gathered along the coast to stuff the hair into donated stockings to create homemade hair booms that float and collect clumps of oil before it reaches the beaches.

Donations stalled briefly in May, when BP said it wouldn’t use the booms. It said its commercial booms



Photo courtesy of Mutt Hutt Inc. (left) | Mutt Hutt groomer Edgar Ricardo shaves hair to donate to the Gulf. • Photo by Jennifer Stanford (right) | Volunteer Victoria Burseson holds up a finished hair boom.



Photo by Vincent Kreamer | A Sport Clips customer gets his hair cut, with donations going to make hair booms for the Gulf Coast region.

absorbed more oil and less water than hair, which could also cause debris.

Riki Ott, who helped with the Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 and wrote two books on the subject, disagrees. “They’re dumping all of this oil, and they’re worried about a little hair,” she says.

Many cites accepted the donations, including Magnolia Springs, Ala. Its volunteer fire department adapted the booms, forming underwater grids to combat underwater oil plumes.

Fairhope, Ala., claimed 1,000 booms, and local residents used them to protect waterfront properties. “All of our research reveals that these booms are highly effective in oil absorption,” says Kevin Eslava, Fairhope assistant public works director.

More than 25 miles of booms were made from 45,000 donations, but materials and money are still needed. “This is a marathon, not a sprint,” says MOT president Lisa Craig Gautier. “It’ll take months and years to clean.”

“Our clients just love it. They want to help.”



A major gift

Every so often, Mitch Kersch, president of A-rated Major Homes in Bayside, N.Y., places an advertisement in the local paper soliciting requests from his neighbors for construction work they need but can't afford.

As the letters come in, Kersch and his son, Jason, select a job to perform for free. "I like to give back," Kersch says. Over the years, his company has installed a kitchen for a family that has three children diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, as well as completing a \$12,000 remodeling job for a husband recovering from a double kidney transplant while his wife struggled with cancer — all gratis.

Kersch helped Long Island, N.Y., resident Karrie Ann Vitti after learning her husband lost three of his fingers in a work-related accident. The Vittis were in the process of remodeling their home with the help of family members when a rainstorm left significant water damage to the house. "Mitch came and said the




Photo courtesy of Major Homes | Mitch Kersch and his son, Jason, do construction work for neighbors in need.



Photo courtesy of Major Homes | To help out a married couple with health issues, Major Homes remodeled a room, free of charge.

"He's beyond fantastic. It was a miracle."

water was coming from the siding on the back of the house because it was installed wrong," Vitti says. "When he said he would fix the siding for free, I was flabbergasted. He's beyond fantastic. It was a miracle."

Inspired by the movie "Pay It Forward," Kersch says giving back to the community doesn't have to involve money. "It could be as simple as walking somebody across the street," he says. "If people could just learn how to do that, the world would be a better place." 

—additional reporting by Nick McLain

Read about our Wishmakers program in Angie's column this month.



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Save with offers from top-rated service companies on Angie's List!

The Angie's List coupon section, which begins on page A3, is designed to help you hire smart and save money at the same time. The service companies featured in this section are offering you a discount on their services. Please note that not all health advertisers are able to offer discounts. Any contractor advertising with Angie's List must maintain a rating of B or better.



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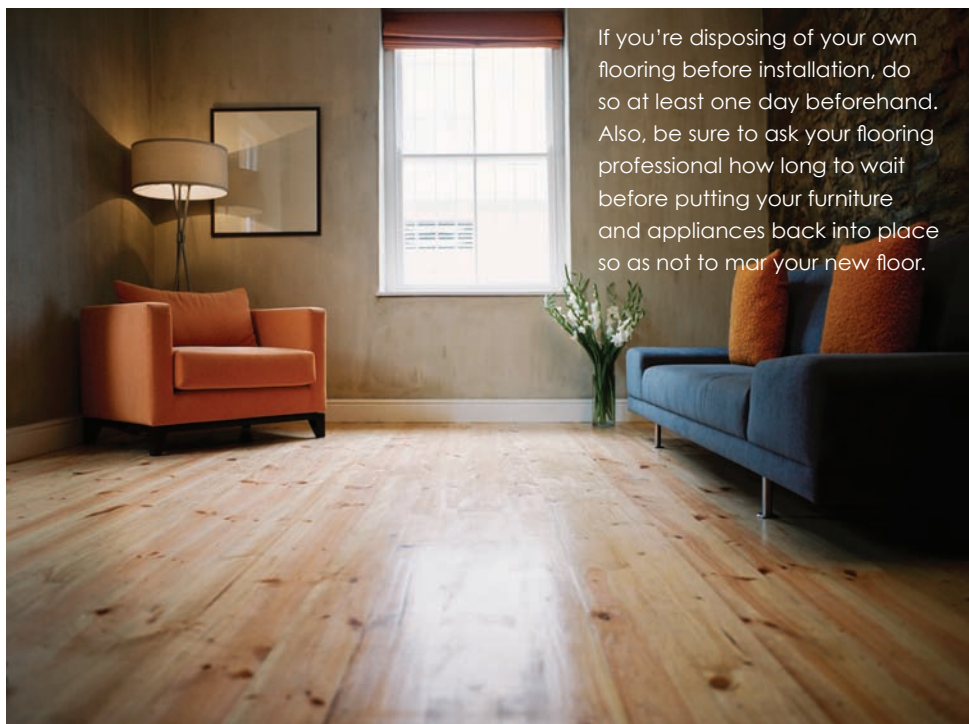
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the classified ad section

In order for companies to place an ad in this section, they must remain in good standing with Angie's List. Any company with a negative rating history is not eligible. New companies not yet on Angie's List may advertise, but they will be held to the same standards. As always, we remind our members to call us first for an updated rating before hiring any service company.

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[TO THE LIST]



Heating & A/C

These heating & air conditioning companies were added to Angie's List recently, thanks to at least one member's review. We want to hear more, so if you've retained their services, too, please submit a report about your experience.



A Comfortable Climate Heating & Cooling

New Palestine

257-4328

Total overall grade: A • Number of reports: 1



A Plus Heating & Cooling Inc.

Greenwood

885-7587

Total overall grade: A • Number of reports: 1



Bullman Heating & Cooling

Greenfield

861-4675

Total overall grade: A • Number of reports: 1



Evergold Mechanical

Greenwood

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Total overall grade: A • Number of reports: 6



Holden Professional Services

Indianapolis

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Don McSwain,
owner

What's your most popular product?

The garden sheds for the backyard are very popular.

What kind of options are available?

You can get different kinds of doors, windows or shutters. There are also options like flower boxes, pegboard, work benches, trim boards, siding and ventilation.

Do I need a building permit?

There are probably 15 counties or townships within a 70-mile radius that commonly require permits.

How long do they last? What should be done to prolong their life?

They can easily last 12 to 15 years without any problems. Just like a regular home, you want to caulk around the trim and windows, and keep the paint updated.

What's the average cost?

I'd say between \$2,500 and \$3,500, for a 10-by-12, depending on the options.

Need a new home for your tools, car or garden gear? Three builders nail down the answers to an outstanding new outbuilding.

Reporting by Joshua Palmer

FIVE STAR INDUSTRIES INC.

8131 W. 10th St.
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271-2596 • fivestarbarns.com



Meg Gettum,
owner

The most popular is a 10-foot-by-12-foot storage shed for the backyard.

You can get things like larger overhangs for the porch area, windows, skylights, ridge vents, shelving, storage lofts and work benches.

It's different from county to county, and town to town. In Marion County, you need a permit if the structure is more than 120 square feet.

The siding we use has a 35-year warranty. As long as it's painted and maintained the same as you would with your house, it's going to last indefinitely.

The base price for the 10-by-12 is \$1,549. Most run about \$1,700 to \$1,800.

COACH HOUSE GARAGES

Indianapolis
545-6740
coachhousegarages.com



Rick Otto,
sales manager

The most popular size is the 24-foot-by-24-foot detached garage.

There are all kinds of window options, and different kinds of siding and garage doors. There are also storage options, or using part of the space for living quarters or work space.

Absolutely.

Our garages should last 50 to 75 years. We provide a recommended maintenance sheet for components like garage doors. Otherwise, just paint it and seal the concrete periodically.

Each garage is custom-built and priced to fit each customer's needs, so there's not really an average price.

The service companies featured in the Comparative Shopper column are almost always highly rated on Angie's List, but we occasionally include a company that is not yet rated. If you've used any of these companies, please submit a report about your experience.



We never have a shortage of companies willing to help in some way.

We love seeing much-needed wishes come true

by Angie Hicks, founder of Angie's List

EACH DAY AT Angie's List, we receive thousands of reports from members nationwide detailing their experiences with service companies and health care providers in their area. The majority of those reports are positive, reflecting the professionalism highly rated companies on Angie's List deliver to our members. Some reports are not so positive, but nonetheless are invaluable in guiding members to make good hiring decisions.

As we've received these reports over the years, we've also learned about the good deeds many companies do — from making small gestures of generosity to very large donations of time, materials and labor for those in need. I hope you took a couple of minutes to read about a few of these bighearted service providers in this month's cover story.

One of our own labors of love at Angie's List began in 2004, when we launched our Wishmakers program. Since then, we've worked as a liaison with many highly rated companies willing to volunteer time and service to dozens of families all over the country as a way to contribute to the community.

There have been many moving stories of generosity over the years — from a Los Angeles-based contractor who replaced damaged flooring for a wheelchair-bound child diagnosed with brain cancer, to a foster parent in Boston who had taken in more than 70 children and received much-needed kitchen repairs and home organization services.

My all-time favorite Wishmakers project, though, came in 2008 and is our largest one to-date. An Indianapolis family had received a devastating diagnosis for their infant son. The child had Severe

Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID) — commonly known as the “bubble boy” disease — meaning his body couldn’t withstand germs, pollutants and certain fibers. The family’s home needed to be significantly modified.

An astounding 21 service companies helped pull off the \$30,000 project by modifying the home’s heating and cooling system, replacing the carpet with laminate floors — and since the child couldn’t go outside — added an entire room with several windows to help bring the outside in. We’ve kept in touch with the family since and received great news that he’s responded well to treatment and a stem cell transplant and is now out of isolation.

Angela Barnes, who works in our public relations department and coordinates Wishmakers projects, says she never takes for granted

the volume of volunteers who lend a hand. “Even though the economy has been tough the past couple of years, we never have a shortage of companies willing to help in some way,” Barnes says. “We’ve even had instances where the offers for help actually exceeded the need.”

We love to hear inspiring stories like these and we think it speaks volumes about the companies that work so hard to give back. Do you know of a service provider who’s gone above and beyond in your community? E-mail us at mailbag@angieslist.com or include it as part of your report. We’ll be looking for more good news like this to report. ☺

Turn to page 18 to read about a local contractor who’s making a difference in your area.



Photos by Brandon Smith | Twenty-one companies volunteered to help Sebastian Guarneros and his parents, Karin and Enrique, in our largest Wishmakers project so far.

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Erin Stahl

Manager of Member Services

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Holiday Hours

We will be closed Saturday,
Sept. 4 and Monday, Sept. 6

www.angieslist.com

4

TIPS FOR GIVING BACK

Ready to start giving back to your community but not sure where to begin? Consider the following:

- Research the issues that are important to you.** If you're ready to dedicate your time, money or skills to a cause, make sure you're passionate about it. Consider supporting companies on Angie's List whose community outreach programs reflect your ideals.
- Don't bite off more than you can chew.** Make sure it fits into your hectic life. You don't want to frustrate your family, exhaust yourself or shortchange the organization you're trying to help.
- Think outside of the box.** We know hospitals, animal shelters and food pantries rely on volunteers, but consider other options that might not have crossed your mind, such as public schools, halfway houses, community theaters or local parks.
- Why not start a volunteer group yourself?** Rally your neighbors to clean up that vacant lot on the corner, patrol the neighborhood, paint an elderly neighbor's house or take turns keeping an eye on the ailing person down the street.



Before you take another step, turn to our **Featured Services** section on page A2 for a variety of flooring professionals.