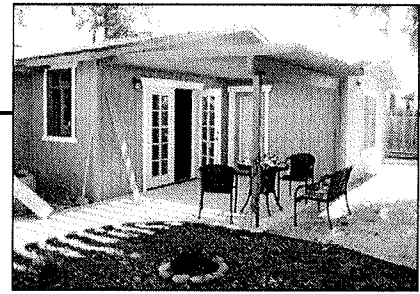




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PolyHouse Combines Education And Community Benefit

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



For students enrolled in Cal Poly's industrial and manufacturing engineering project management class, succeeding in education is a community service.

The class is a multi-disciplinary course that draws from a range of majors including industrial engineering, engineering management, mechanical engineering, business and agriculture. Every spring for the past eight years the students have learned from hands-on experience in fundraising to project management to physical labor while improving the quality of life of a physically disabled, financially disadvantaged family or individual.

"It is a platform between the classroom and the real world," said Dr. Roya Javadpour, founder of PolyHouse and class professor. "They not only learn the project management skills in terms of how to plan, but they actually see their plans in action. They see the fruits of their work. It's a project with a real budget, a real client and a tight deadline. It is also about giving back to the community that the students enjoy so much being a part of. They become more aware of some problems or difficulties people face in the community. They become more sensitive to the needs of people. They really experience that by making other people happy you bring happiness into your own life. It makes them aware that they have the

ability within themselves to make an impact on somebody else's life."

This year the students renovated the Shandon home of Stacie Slattery and her 16-year-old son Jacob, who was born with a severe form of spina bifida. He is paralyzed from the mid-waist down and has been confined to a wheelchair since the age of two.

Over his lifetime Jacob has endured 12 major surgeries and countless other hospitalizations. In addition, he confronts the far-reaching impacts from hydrocephalus (water on the brain) and osteoporosis, which greatly affect his executive functioning skills. As he has grown older, his assisted care demands have increased, and the two and a half bedroom, two-bathroom non-ADA compliant home has become problematic.

Together the students on the PolyHouse team changed the lives of the Slattery family.

The project involved 38 students, six weeks of planning and three weekends of construction to overhaul the home with a price tag of more than \$200,000.

As part of the project, the students added an additional 360 square-feet of space, enlarged and converted the bathrooms and kitchen to meet ADA standards, built a new bedroom for Jacob, built a laundry room, added more closet space, rewired the house, painted and did landscaping that would allow Jacob to utilize the backyard. Additionally,

through the generosity of REC Solar, solar panels were installed on the house.

"It is going to be life changing for Jacob and for our family," said an emotionally moved Stacie. "It is everything that we have ever dreamed of. It is an answer to our prayers. Since Jacob was about 2-years-old, we have been hoping to have a home that was wheelchair accessible. We have been making incremental steps one at a time. This is definitely not something that we could have envisioned."

Stacie says the new home will give

Jacob independence and show him that he can make his way in the world while increasing time the family can spend together engaged in fun activities.

"If we have a little bit of time here and there and stress is reduced we can go in the backyard and have a bar-b-que or get Jacob back in choir. I can't even begin to say 'thank you.'"

The university does not fund PolyHouse. The success of the project is, in part, based on cash and in-kind donations from the community. To make a donation, visit www.polyhouse.org.

