



*"If I had a pile of money, I'd give more!"*

*Donor Profile: Henry Mendel*

## A Long Journey Home

**H**enry Mendel is a generous supporter of REACH's Community Builders Program, which recently installed new windows and linoleum in his home through the Paint & Repair-a-thon. Although homeowners seeking no-cost repairs from the program must demonstrate financial need in order to qualify, they often make generous donations—in fact, their contributions make up almost 10 percent of donations made by individuals to REACH this year.

Henry has lived in his Lents home since 1959, but it was a long journey to get there. Originally from Germany, he spent two years in a concentration camp during World War II. After the war, he worked for the International Refugee Organization, helping to resettle tens of thousands of people. Although he knew his work was essential, he remembers, "I had no desire to stay in Germany. Everybody was gone. I finally put in my own papers."

When he arrived in the US, his journey was far

from over. He had planned to go to El Paso, where he knew about a job, but not long after his boat landed in the states, he learned that the quotas there had been filled. Instead, he was sent to Oregon, a state he'd never heard of. "We had to go find it on a map!" he remembers, laughing with the sense of humor that pervades even his most difficult stories.

After arriving in Oregon, he applied for work at a furniture manufacturer with 30 others. Unfortunately, the supervisor turned everyone away. "But," recalled Henry with a smile, "I recognized he had a really funny accent. So I waited until everybody was gone and found out he was also from Germany. I said, 'Hey buddy, I just got off the train and I really need a job.'" He was hired on the spot.

Henry is a generous supporter of REACH, like many recipients of the Community Builders Program. He also cares deeply about his community. In addition to giving to REACH, Henry donates to Portland Police Bureau's Sunshine Division and the Jewish Agency. With his characteristic laugh, he insists, "If I had a pile of money, I'd give more!" Thank you, Henry—REACH couldn't do this work without the generous support of people like you.



*Volunteer Profile: Deanna Hess*

## The Voice of REACH in Lents

**A**fter last year's snowstorms, the shut-off valve to Deanna Hess' water was stuck wide open. Huge bills started coming in that would have been unmanageable for most. For Deanna, they were especially painful. Due to chronic health problems following an on-the-job injury, she was no longer working, and she had lost her husband five years ago. It was hard to stay on top of things.

She got so behind on her water bills that it was shut off completely for two weeks. She can joke about it now. "I did what you could call urban camping," she laughed, explaining how she carried water from a friend's house.

Through the Lents Neighborhood Association, Deanna found out about REACH's Community Builders program, which provides free home repairs to senior and disabled homeowners. The leak got fixed, and Deanna got to work, spreading the word about REACH in her neighborhood and at her church. Oftentimes, REACH supplements our outreach efforts through word of mouth of our Community Builders recipients, like Deanna. We're always grateful when neighbors hear about REACH through their community.

After being in her home for 17 years, reaching out to her neighbors came naturally. Two of them have already applied for help from the program, including one man who is struggling with lung disease as his wife battles cancer. "He just puts the hospital bills in a bag because he can't afford to pay them," said Deanna, who was aware that the couple had not been able to upkeep their home. "I knew he needed help, but he didn't know where to go."

Deanna hopes better maintained homes will improve the overall quality of living in Lents, which sees its share of crime and other problems. "We're trying real hard to improve it," she said. At church, Deanna's outreach for the Community Builders Program is also well received, especially from older people who want to stay in their homes. Although it's great to rely on family when you can, "you can't expect the kids to do it all the time, or a lot of people are like me, they don't have kids," she said.

Thank you Deanna — your generosity and commitment make our work possible.

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## Ed Reilly

### A Teacher Helps Residents Bridge the Digital Divide



Ritzdorf Court apartment residents who attend computer classes in their building are doubly fortunate. Not only do they get to build technology skills in the Ritzdorf's free computer lab – they get to learn from Ed Reilly. Ed's background in software training makes him a natural to lead REACH's no-fee computer classes for residents. But he's not just teaching. "It's been a real education for me, too," said Ed. "My picture of what people need from technology has really broadened."

Ed has trained students from many backgrounds, from CEO's to manufacturing workers learning English as a second language. "I thought I'd kind of seen it all," said Ed. But while his other students usually had specific business needs or were looking to take that next step in their careers, "the people I was training at the Ritzdorf were just looking to connect and to understand the world around them." Ed estimates that only about 30% of his students at the Ritzdorf, which is a REACH property for formerly homeless individuals, have had any previous experience with computers. Still, they're eager to reconnect online with people with whom they've lost touch.

Ed has stepped in to form remarkably successful partnerships with his students. "How I taught and what I taught changed based on what they needed," he said. Another key to their success? "Lots of repetition!" And many of Ed's students pay him the ultimate compliment, returning to repeat classes in order to keep their skills sharp.

Ed is encouraged by how readily his students have applied their new skills. "Some of them are on Facebook now," he said, and have reconnected with children, family and friends. Ed's students even find him online to chat from time to time. He's well aware that individuals with low incomes such as the residents of the Ritzdorf are often stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide, so he's all the more pleased to see how fully they've embraced the online world. "It's so pervasive in our culture now, and they want to get it," he said.

Ed grew up volunteering with his family and has been drawn to REACH and its mission. Now he's looking to expand his computer curriculum to other REACH properties, too. Thanks to you, Ed, now even more of REACH's residents can look forward to building a better future on the other side of the digital divide.

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