

Remodeler Revisited

A Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist Discusses His Projects for the Last Year



by Samantha
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If you want to know what a difference a year makes, talk to Byron Andrews. Andrews is a certified aging-in-place specialist (CAPS) and owner of Advanced Innovation Solutions LLC in Denham Springs, La.

The June 2007 issue of SHELTER magazine feature, "Aging with Ease," profiled Andrews. It wasn't the promise of profit that lured Andrews into the aging-in-place remodeling business; it wasn't any desire to feed his ego or any quest for market share either. It was a family tragedy 17 years before. He pulled his brother Dawson, off the bottom of the river on July 4, 1980. Dawson suffered long-term bodily damage as a result of the accident. Andrews vowed to make his brother's home more accessible himself.

While it was a tragedy that started Andrews in this business, a year after SHELTER initially interviewed him, he is still hard at work remodeling homes for people with disabilities or who have ailments due to age or sickness.

While reports state that the remodeling industry shows some weakness due to the overall housing market, there are market pockets, such as aging-in-place remodels that have not seen any negative effects at all.

Andrews can attest to that. In the last year, he says his business

has been explosive. He runs anywhere from three weeks to six weeks out on projects.

"I've done a complete bathroom remodel in New Orleans with a wheel chair lift and a roll-in shower, and I've done a stair lift for a



man," Andrews says. "I've done some overhead lift systems for some people," and he explains that an overhead lift is a rail that mounts to the ceiling in a house, and it has a trolley on it with a sling. The sling goes on the user so you can lift him up and out of bed or help move him to a chair, a commode or in the bathtub. It provides movement for the disabled throughout the house.

Andrews finds and buys most his new products on the Internet. One of the products he has been impressed with is BathEase, which is a step-in bathtub (*see sidebar about this product*). Andrews says the BathEase product is reasonably priced, a characteristic of many aging-in-place products. "I've noticed that, as more and more people get into this, the prices for products have become more reasonable," he says.

Andrews' CAPS business has moved him



When Andrews was interviewed a year ago, he had just completed a bathroom modification for a young couple, Greg and Dawn Pitkin, in Baton Rouge, La. Greg was diagnosed with Lou Gerhig's disease after being married two years. Andrews is pictured here (on the left) with the Pitkins at a Mardi Gras celebration.

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— Byron Andrews

in a new direction, too. He is a manufacturer’s rep for many of the companies whose products he uses. “I go to the manufacturer’s home office and get trained on the products before I use or sell them,” he explains.

And while it might lead to more competition for him, he says, “Distributors, dealers and retailers should start supplying these types of products.”

He does have some words of caution, though directed more toward consumers and to the customers to whom distributors, dealers and retailers might sell.

“It’s a good market to get into, but con-

sumers need to be cautious and make sure they get a reputable contractor that knows what he is doing, not just any old person off the street. It’s not a normal procedural job,” Andrews says. “They should look for a CAPS-certified remodeler.”

Andrews says he sees horror stories every day. “It doesn’t matter what you’re installing or the type of remodel ... you have to make it work for the client. If the job doesn’t work for them, then I haven’t done my job right. Probably every other month, I go back over someone else’s work to fix it.



One product that Byron Andrews, owner of Advanced Innovation Solutions, installs in many aging-in-place remodels is the BathEase bathtub, which permits barrier-free entry to a standard residential bathtub.

Bathing with Ease

A new bathtub-shower unit has been designed especially for the elderly and the disabled. It permits barrier-free entry to a residential bathtub.

BathEase Inc. says it is the first company in the world to develop the technology to remove this barrier with the introduction of an innovative bathtub door. For many people it restores independence, and for caregivers it eliminates the strain of lifting.

Ideal for new construction or remodeling, it fits through standard doors, while Models 854 and 954 fit in the same space as standard bathtubs. The bathtub features the lowest threshold in the industry (two inches) and zero threshold when recessed in floor.

It installs like a standard bathtub, and company officials say any qualified plumber can install it. It is manufactured in easy-to-clean high-gloss acrylic as opposed to less expensive gel-coated fiberglass, and it has a five-year warranty.

The BathEase tub was designed with the assistance of Lockheed Martin and is approved by NASA for related technology transfer. BathEase is proud to meet or exceed HUD and ANSI requirements, and is certified and tested by the NAHB Research Center.

The product is sold through distribution, and the company says it has distributor opportunities available.

✓ www.bathease.com 