

Published December 7th, 2011

## New Transitional Home Awaits Tenants

By Sophie Braccini



Dan Hogue demonstrates the shower in Las Trampas' newly remodeled home. Photo Sophie Braccini

Las Trampas Incorporated, the non-profit supporting people with developmental disabilities in Lafayette since 1958, is putting the final touches on a completely remodeled home located in downtown Lafayette. It was designed and specially outfitted to allow some of the young adults who are served by the organization to achieve independence. Building to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) specifications and employing elements of what is now called Universal Design - creating environments that are usable by all people - gives a feel of spaciousness and normality to the home.

"This project was made possible by a Community Development Block Grant from the Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development," says Bonnie Peacock, the Development Director at Las Trampas. The non-profit got \$165,000 to remodel the property they owned but that was completely inadequate for disabled adults to live in independently. The entire inside space was redone within their budget and features four bedrooms and two baths.

"Some of the counters are lower than is the custom," says Las Trampas Associate Executive Director Ron Kilgore, "and that height is quite convenient for anyone prepping food, independent of their posture. Some of the drawer

block units are on wheels and can be removed to either allow someone in a wheelchair to get closer, or to create a separate island." There is also space under the sink that allows for easy wheelchair access.

All of the electrical plugs are higher on the walls, while the light switches are placed lower than usual. "This design is in fact very convenient for anyone," says Dan Hogue, the organization's new Executive Director. He notes that several cities, including Fremont, Sacramento, Albuquerque, and Winnipeg, encourage Universal Design standards for all types of new developments.

Other elements of Universal Design found in the Lafayette home include wide doorways and hallways (a three-foot minimum width), no step entries, and lever door handles. "This kind of design just gives a more open feel to the house," adds Hogue, "it is one of the things we will all learn from people with disabilities."

The main bathroom also underwent practical and aesthetic improvements. The space that was once two small bathrooms is now a large area that includes a separate toilet and shower. "Beyond the grab bars, what is needed in a bathroom for people with a disability is a five-foot radius in which to maneuver a wheelchair," explains Kilgore. The shower room closes with a door and there is no lip to be negotiated in order to access the shower itself. The walls are completely tiled since there is no shower curtain, and all of the shower heads and faucets are placed at a good height for anyone to reach whether seated or standing.

"This house is a model of our strategy for the future," explains Hogue, "we want to provide solutions that help young adults with learning or developmental disabilities to evolve toward independence. This house where low income young adults can live will be a step for them, like we took when we left our parents' homes to go to college. Here they will learn the skills they will need to be independent, they will be integrated into the community and no different than anyone else on the block."

The house includes a room and bathroom for a staff person. "Depending on the needs of our tenants, the staff person will be there full- or part-time," explains Kilgore.

The organization does not know if it will be able to develop more such homes. "We are very thankful that Bonnie (Peacock) was able to secure this grant for us," says Hogue, "in this economy, our sources of funding are under a lot of stress."

Las Trampas will hold a ribbon cutting ceremony in January of 2012; adults with disabilities between the age of 18 and 24 who want to transition to a more independent life are welcomed to contact the Lafayette non-profit.

For more information email [Itiexec@pacbell.net](mailto:Itiexec@pacbell.net) or call Dan Hogue at 284-1462.



Unassuming on the outside, the interior of the home has been designed to be usable by everyone. Photo Doug Kohen

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA