

Nuts & Bolts

Volume 30, Number 1
January-March 2012

a newsletter from Home Repair Resource Center

Our Project Repair workshops will no longer be limited to Cleveland Heights residents. People from surrounding communities can now take advantage of the hands-on instruction that we offer on many common home repair projects.

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Eligibility expanded for tool loan and workshops

As a result of the Strategic Planning process that HRRC has been undertaking over the last year, access to some of our programs is being broadened. As of January 1, 2012, more people will be eligible to use two of our programs:

1. **HRRC's Tool Loan will be open to Cleveland Heights homeowners with higher incomes.**

For example, the previous income limit for a family of 4 was \$50,250; it will now be \$75,350.



We have already changed the hours for tool pick-up and return to allow people to access the program after work. (See article on page 11 for new income guidelines and more changes to the tool loan procedure.)

2. **HRRC's repair workshops will be open to other communities.**

Our Project Repair workshops will no longer be limited to Cleveland Heights residents.

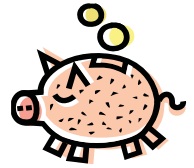
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HRRC will close for ten days at Christmas/New Year's.

Be sure to plan ahead if you need to borrow tools or use our library over the holidays.



HRRC's Financial Fitness/ New Home Buyer Classes



Home Repair Resource Center's interactive Financial Fitness series will help you develop money skills, provide you with strategies for improving your credit, and teach you how to protect your home investment.

All classes will be held at the Cleveland Heights - University Heights Library, 2345 Lee Road, from 6 - 8 p.m. Reservations are requested – call (216) 381-6100, ext. 13.

January	24	Tuesday	Power of a Personal Budget
	31	Tuesday	Creditworthy Equals Choices
February	21	Tuesday	Power of a Personal Budget
	28	Tuesday	Creditworthy Equals Choices
March	5	Monday	Power of a Personal Budget
	12	Monday	Understanding Credit & Mortgages
	19	Monday	Shopping for a Mortgage & Avoiding Default
	26	Monday	Home Maintenance for Home Buyers



*Best Wishes
for a Joyous
Holiday Season*

from all of us at

Home Repair Resource Center

Holiday Closings:

Home Repair Resource Center will be closed from Friday, December 23rd through Monday, January 2nd for the Christmas Holiday; Monday, January 16th, for Martin Luther King Day; and Monday, February 20th, for Presidents' Day. *Plan ahead to get any tools or information you'll need.*

Please help:

If you have't yet returned the card enclosed in your last *Nuts & Bolts*, please mail it to us, drop it off at our office, or call us at 381-6100, ext. 16, with your list of do-self and contracted repairs done in 2011. The information will give us one measure of how our workshops, tool loan, and repair information impact the community. **We're asking each and every PR member to help!**



*Free advice
from the experts . . .*

Water Heaters - A Sustainable Approach to Home Use

Fred Cortright, former Construction Manager, Habitat for Humanity

Today, there are many options for heating water for your home, ranging from traditional hot water tanks to tankless water heaters to solar panels. Come and learn about your choices, and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Tuesday, January 24th, 2012, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

The Expanding Role & Importance of a Home Inspection

Fred Freer, Four Square Home Inspections

Many people hire a home inspector when purchasing a new home, but home inspections can serve other purposes, as well. Learn why and when to hire a home inspector, what to look for in an inspection company (and inspector), what to discuss with the inspector when finalizing the contract, and what to expect from a home inspection. Learn more about radon (the leading environmental cause of lung cancer), mold, wood-destroying insects, and other related topics.

Tuesday, February 21st, 2012, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Exterior Lighting for Landscaping & Security

Robert Eskin, Kichler Lighting

Exterior lighting can highlight landscape features or areas of your home, increase safety by illuminating entrances and walkways, or increase curb appeal by creating a desired ambiance. Learn how to choose lighting that will be both decorative and functional.

Tuesday, March 27th, 2012, 7 - 8:30 p.m. (new date)



**HOME
REPAIR
RESOURCE
CENTER**

*HRRC's HouseMender University sessions
are free and open to residents of any community.*

Reservations requested – call (216) 381-6100, ext. 16

All classes will be held at

**Cleveland Heights - University Heights
Public Library, 2345 Lee Road**

Water heater safety issues

Are you planning to replace your water heater, or do you have questions about one that was already replaced? Here are some things you may not have considered:



First, think about your water pressure. High water pressure (constant or intermittent) is not unusual in this area, so your home may have had a device installed to control it. If you have a **pressure regulator** on your water line (usually found near the water meter), Ohio Plumbing Code requires that you also have a **thermal expansion tank** on the cold water pipe above your water heater. The tank will resemble a large, thermos bottle or gallon jug with an enameled surface.

Water expands as it is heated, raising the pressure in the pipes. The expansion tank contains an internal “bladder,” partially filled with air, that gives the water a place to go as it expands, so it doesn’t damage your system.

Thermal expansion tanks come in several sizes and must be fitted to the water pressure of the line and the volume of your hot water tank. Installation is not difficult.



Water Pressure Regulator



Water Pressure Regulator

Another safety device to protect you from high water pressure is the **temperature-pressure relief valve**. The T-P valve, usually found on the side of the water heater near the top, is designed to open when pressure or water temperature rise above safe levels,

If you have a pressure regulator on your water line (usually found near the water meter), Ohio Plumbing Code requires that you also have a thermal expansion tank on the cold water pipe above your water heater.

minimizing the chance of an explosion. You should always have a pipe running from the valve to within 6 inches of the floor. **Never block-off or plug the T-P valve to stop it from leaking.** Instead, replace a leaking T-P valve with a new valve of the same rating.

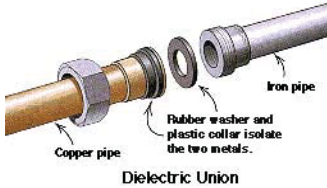
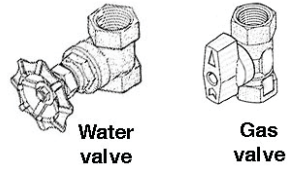
Next, look at your gas and water supply lines. Ohio Plumbing Code requires that these lines be rigid pipe (not flexible connective lines.) Look at the valves, too. The valve on your gas supply line

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Water heater safety issues

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should be a ball-type gas valve, rather than an old water-type (globe) valve. Some city inspection departments insist on a new gas valve every time the water heater is replaced – which is not a bad idea.



Another place to check is the connection between the water heater and your water supply lines. A **dielectric union** should be used to isolate the steel tank from the copper in the water lines, to prevent these dissimilar metals from creating a weak electrical current. Although you won't feel it, the current will accelerate the corrosion of the steel tank and shorten the life of your water heater.

Finally, check the condition of the galvanized steel flue pipe that, on most water heaters, vents exhaust gases – including carbon monoxide – from the tank to the chimney. (If you have a new high-efficiency unit, the exhaust gases may be vented directly to the outside through a PVC pipe.) The flue pipe should rise 1/4" per foot. If there are any holes or thin spots in the metal, replace the pipe. Also, fill any gaps in the mortar seal where the flue enters the chimney.

If you pay attention to these issues, you and your family will be much safer in your home.

Free consultations on sustainability

Want advice on reducing energy use, shrinking your carbon footprint, and making your home more sustainable? Schedule a free 30-minute consultation at HRRC's new resource area at the CH - UH Main Library.

Starting in February, HRRC hopes to arrange for volunteer experts to be available from 7 - 8 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month to give advice about making your home more sustainable. If you're looking at "big picture" considerations, you can get some general guidance about where to start and what to think about. If, on the other hand, you are looking at a specific issue (traditional water heaters vs. tankless, for example,) you can get answers to your questions.

This service is available to residents of all communities, but spaces are limited. Call (216) 381-6100, ext. 16, to schedule your consultation. To help the consultant better respond to your concerns, please bring with you photos, drawings, floor plans, and other information pertaining to the construction of your house and/or the specific area you are asking about.



Workshop Schedule

This winter, we will be offering some of our most popular classes, on electrical and plumbing repairs. You can enroll for individual workshops or for the entire series. We encourage you to make your reservations early, as these classes can fill rapidly.

Classes are now open to residents of all communities. Participants pay a modest **materials fee** (sliding scale, scholarships available to Cleveland Heights residents with low incomes.) For more information or to save your spot, go to www.hrrc-ch.org or call 381-6100, ext. 16.

January

Installing a Dropped Ceiling

Monday, January 9th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Patrick Johnson, Johnson Home Remodeling LLC

You'll learn how to measure, cut, and install accoustical ceiling tile in a basement, kitchen, or other setting. We'll also show you how to repair an existing dropped ceiling.

Basic Electrical Repairs

Monday, January 23rd, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Jim Cline, Retired Electrician

We'll show you how to replace single-pole switches and outlets (including GFCIs) and how to install simple fixtures.

Intermediate Electrical Repairs, Part 1

Monday, January 30th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Jim Cline, Retired Electrician

You'll learn how to run wires through finished walls, how to add or change circuits, how to install more complex fixtures and three-way switches, and how to correct overloaded circuits.

February

Intermediate Electrical Repairs, Part 2

Monday, February 6th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Jim Cline, Retired Electrician

Continuation of January 30th workshop.



Practical Troubleshooting

Monday, February 13th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Jim Cline, Retired Electrician

At this class, you'll learn how to identify and correct common causes of non-working lights, switches and outlets.



Toilet Repair & Replacement

Monday, February 27th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Herb's Plumbing

We'll show you how to solve the mystery of "ghost flushes" in the middle of the night or a toilet that runs constantly; what tools to use when your toilet is clogged; and how to choose and install a new toilet.

March

Faucet Repair & Replacement

Monday, March 5th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Herb's Plumbing

At this class, you'll learn how to repair various types of faucets and how to replace an old faucet with a new model.

Drains & Traps

Monday, March 12th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Herb's Plumbing

We'll discuss how your drain lines function and how to maintain and update your drain system. You'll learn how to assemble plastic drain pipes, fittings and traps, and how to operate a drain snake to clear clogged lines.



Copper Water Lines

Monday, March 19th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Herb's Plumbing

You'll learn to measure, cut, and solder copper pipe and fittings. You'll also practice making various types of connections in water supply lines and learn where each should be used.

Plastic Water Lines

Monday, March 26th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor: Herb's Plumbing

If you want an alternative to copper, two types of plastic water lines have now been approved for use in Cleveland Heights. We'll show you how to measure, cut and connect each type.

Kitchen remodeling on a budget

Remodeling a kitchen can be one of the most stressful projects you can undertake. If funds are tight, you'll need to be even more careful in your planning. Before you start, here are some things to consider.

Cost

First things first – your budget! Whether you will be doing it yourself or hiring a contractor, you have to determine what you have available to spend on the project. Everything else will be secondary to financial considerations.

This article does not address specific costs – that subject could take several pages alone – but there are some general perspectives on project costs that you may find helpful. Moving the locations of windows and doors is usually very expensive. Even moving water or electric lines can add more to your cost than you can afford, so you will have to decide if relocating that sink is worth it! Working within a very tight budget may mean that your kitchen remodeling job is limited to cosmetic changes. But, even such changes – such as replacing the countertop, installing new lighting, and adding a fresh coat of paint – can rejuvenate the room. You can complete the new look with new faucets and hardware, like cabinet handles.



While this “low-bucks” approach won’t gain you a built-in refrigerator or a restaurant-style stove, you can still be resourceful when faced with a problem. For example, you can have the dishwasher painted to match the other appliances instead of replacing it, and then put the cost savings into another part of the job. Recycle what you can; for example, you can choose to clean up and re-use cabinets, rather than buy new ones.

Even with a “bare bones” project, the work is likely to take longer than you anticipate. Don’t believe a contractor who promises that a whole new kitchen can be done in two weeks; you’ll want to insist on a realistic timetable that will allow for a few unexpected delays.

A tight budget will usually require some sweat equity. Almost anyone can patch plaster and paint, and it’s not that hard to replace a faucet. However, when there are structural changes to be done, call in a professional tradesperson. Moving or replacing plumbing lines and upgrading electrical work will usually require permits, and the work must be inspected by your city’s Building Department.

Expect to find extra things that will need repair as the job progresses, such as crumbling plaster walls or corroded iron piping, and allow for that work in

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Kitchen remodeling on a budget

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your budget (call it your “contingency fund”). Getting a minimum of three bids is another smart idea. An estimators’ guide will give you a clue as to average prices for the work you need to have done.

Especially if money is tight, stay away from extreme or custom designs in cabinets, light fixtures and hardware. Standard items – though not as glamorous – are less costly, and it will be easier to find replacement parts when you need them.



Comparison pricing is work, but your research can pay off in considerable savings. Let a store know you’re working on a remodeling project and, armed with your complete shopping list, inquire if it can offer any discounts if you make all your purchases there. Many retailers have a meet-or-beat pricing policy that may save you some more money.

Check online sources, too. Look at different brands and collect model numbers at a home center or plumbing-supply house, then investigate web outlets.

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Design

You’ll find graph paper very helpful in your kitchen planning. By mapping out the floor plan of your kitchen, you can work through new ideas. You’ll want to have accurate measurements of the walls and the locations of all doors and windows. There are some inexpensive computer design programs for homeowners, so you can print out various options.

Each year several do-it-yourself magazines have a kitchen-remodeling issue; check at your local library for back copies to scour for ideas. Develop a “wish list” of things you would like to have – roll-out pots and pans drawers, recycling bins, and the like – and see which of them might fit your budget.

Consult an architect if you will be changing the structural design of the house, such as moving walls or building an addition. It’s not a bad idea to get expert advice when moving or enlarging a window, or relocating water and drain lines. In some communities, exterior changes may have to be approved by an Architectural Review Board and/or the Ohio Historical Society. If you intend to stay within the existing kitchen floor plan, you will not need to do these steps.

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Kitchen remodeling on a budget

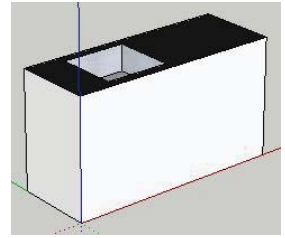
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Many “home center” retail stores and kitchen-and-bath specialty shops will do kitchen cabinet design plans for you. Most of the stores charge for the design plan, but will drop the charge if you purchase the cabinets from them.

Preparation

When it comes time to start the work, be prepared to be inconvenienced for a long period. Even with a “bare bones” project, the work is likely to take longer than you anticipate. Don’t believe a contractor who promises that a whole new kitchen can be done in two weeks; you’ll want to insist on a realistic timetable that will allow for a few unexpected delays.

Before the job starts, you’ll need to pack up the contents of your kitchen, so they’re out of the way while the work is done. Keep out any items you use frequently, and store the rest elsewhere in the house. Heavy boxes from liquor stores are usually sturdy enough to handle pots and pans, silverware, and small appliances. Before you pack up your pantry staples, use this opportunity to check them and get rid of anything that is no longer in good condition.



Install a barrier of plastic sheeting at each doorway to the kitchen. It will help contain dust and debris – especially important if you will be disturbing old lead-based paint. *(Make sure to educate yourself on the precautions you or your contractor should take if your house was built before 1978.)*

Especially if money is tight, stay away from extreme or custom designs in cabinets, light fixtures and hardware. Standard items – though not as glamorous – are less costly, and it will be easier to find replacement parts when you need them.

If you are getting new cabinets, open the cartons and inspect the cabinets as soon as they are delivered. That way, you can deal with any broken or damaged pieces before it’s time for them to be installed. It sometimes takes weeks to get a replacement unit.

Remodeling your kitchen is a major undertaking that, done well, can pay big dividends in increasing both the market value of your property and your ability to enjoy your home. With sufficient planning, you can avoid many problems, but even a low-cost kitchen remodeling project is going to disrupt your life. Approaching that disruption with humor – and an occasional restaurant meal – will help make it more bearable.

Eligibility expanded for tool loan and workshops

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People from surrounding communities can now take advantage of the hands-on instruction that we offer on many common home repair projects. So, you can bring a friend or co-worker with you to a workshop, even if they don't live in Cleveland Heights!

People can now email us to register for a workshop at workshops@hrrc-ch.org. (Be sure to provide a daytime phone number so we can get back to you!) There will also be a new, simpler fee structure for the workshops: \$10 for residents and \$15 for non-residents, with scholarships available to Cleveland Heights residents with low incomes. Call (216) 381-6100 for details, or check out our website: www-hrrc-ch.org.

New tool loan procedures

HRRC has revamped its tool loan, opening it to more people and reconfiguring the fee structure. Here's what you need to know:

- You can reserve tools at any time by email at toolloan@hrrc-ch.org or by phone at (216) 381-6100, ext. 18. We'll get back to you to confirm your reservation. You can pick up or return tools 5-7 p.m. Mon. - Fri.
- There are new deposit and fee amounts. See HRRC's website (www.hrrc-ch.org) or call for information. Just a reminder that all deposits and fees must be paid in cash, and tools are loaned for a maximum of three days.
- The tool loan is open to Cleveland Heights homeowners who fall within the income guidelines below. (Guidelines are based on HUD's computation of median income for our area, so they will change periodically.) *Income must be documented the first time you borrow tools each calendar year; we'll tell you what you need to bring when we return your call or email.*

Income Guidelines for Tool Loan

<i>family of</i> 1 – \$52,750	5 – \$81,400
2 – \$60,300	6 – \$87,400
3 – \$67,800	7 – \$93,450
4 – \$75,350	8 – \$99,500

Operating support for HRRC is provided by individual donations, foundation grants, and HUD Community Development Block Grant funds through the City of Cleveland Heights.



**HOME
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