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For seniors, maintenance needs grow over time

By Jean Murphy
Daily Herald correspondent

Keith Braude, owner of a Mr. Handyman franchise based in Deerfield, wants to ensure that no senior citizen has to move away from home because he or she can't handle routine household maintenance, or they lack accommodations needed to make their lives safe from falls.

Braude, whose franchise covers southern Lake County, the Northwest suburbs and the North Shore, has been helping homeowners of all ages since 2002. He estimates 20 percent of his residential customers are seniors.

"My guys handle virtually all household maintenance and repairs, or if it is a big job that we can't do, like a whole new roof, we are happy to offer referrals for which we charge nothing," Braude said. "We build ramps, put in extra (hand) railings, add shower grab bars and so forth to increase a home's safety for a senior, and we also clean gutters, change out garbage disposals, paint, replace shower heads -- you name it."

In fact, there is a checklist of common tasks workers can accomplish on the company's website, www.mrhandyman.com.

"The average job takes three to three and a half hours," he said, "but we also have gotten very good at replacing entire bathrooms and those jobs can cost \$18,000 and up."

"We don't like to say no to any request, so we generally do everything from soup to nuts," Braude said. "Most seniors don't really care about the paint on the walls, so they seldom call us for that. They want us to help them with things that will make it easier for them to live in their homes.

"And we are very senior-friendly. If possible, once a senior gets comfortable with a particular serviceman, we try to send the same one back every time if we can," Braude said. "They also like the fact that our guys are bonded and insured and they arrive in a uniform, which makes them less scary and easy to identify. We also do background checks on everyone and try to hire technicians who are family men who live in the local community because we know that adds to the comfort and familiarity factor.

"We are in this business for the long haul so we will accommodate our seniors and all of our customers as best we can," Braude said.

• For more information, contact Mr. Handyman at (847) 279-0280 or visit www.mrhandyman.com (<http://www.mrhandyman.com>) and enter your ZIP code to contact the proper franchise.