

*Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D., is building a national model universal design home in Columbus, Ohio. It has been 7 years in the making. Ground breaking is set for Fall 2006. She will keep SL readers informed of the progress.*

# Universa

## A solution for

by Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D.

On June 13, 1998, I woke up able-bodied and went to bed disabled.

That day my husband, Mark Leder and I, went for a bicycle ride. While we were riding, suddenly, Mark heard what he thought was a gunshot. I heard him say "Look over there, something is falling! Stop!!"

What Mark saw was a large tree halfway to the ground on a path to crush me. In an instant, I was crushed by a 3 1/2 ton tree and paralyzed from the waist down.

Life with a spinal cord injury comes with many obstacles and one of the biggest is my home. When I returned home from the hospital, I was pushed up a steep ramp to my door. Our two-story home suddenly became inaccessible. Frustration set in instantly as I attempted to cook meals, do laundry, shower and get dressed.

My home was not accessible in so many ways. Things were out of reach. The pantry had to be reorganized. Dishes had to be moved to lower shelves. Clothing had to be moved to lower-level closet rods. The doors had to be removed from the shower and toilet areas. My privacy was gone.

For the past seven years, Mark and I have been researching solutions to allow me accessibility and independence in my home. We started reading about universal design and collecting information. The library is full

# I Design

## independent living



**Rosemariae talks with Mark Johnson of Whirlpool about the front opening washer & dryer on pedestals.**

of books on universal design. I also searched the Internet and found information to guide me.

Mark and I made a commitment to build our new home using what we had learned. We also decided to integrate healthy home products and utilize green building materials. We

knew we needed help and assembled the design and building team.

We drove around neighborhoods where we wanted to build in search of a lot. We identified the builders associated with selected lots and began interviewing builders and looking at ranch-style floor plans. We selected

## Some products to be used in the Universal Design Living Laboratory

Gaggenau in-counter steamer, side hinged oven, and cook top  
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iRobot - robots to vacuum all floors and wash hard surface floors  
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Iron-a-Way - wall mounted ironing center [www.ironaway.com](http://www.ironaway.com)

KitchenAid - refrigerator, dishwasher with pedestal for storage  
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Kohler - faucets, sinks, whirlpool, curbless showers, toilets  
[www.kohler.com](http://www.kohler.com)

Lennox Heating & Air Conditioning - heating, air conditioning and filtering  
[www.lennox.com](http://www.lennox.com)

Marvin Windows & Doors - windows and doors [www.marvin.com](http://www.marvin.com)

Silestone - quartz counter tops with leather finish [www.silestoneusa.com](http://www.silestoneusa.com)

Whirlpool - washer and dryer with pedestals for storage  
[www.whirlpool.com](http://www.whirlpool.com)

To learn more about the Universal Design Living Laboratory go to:  
[www.UDLL.com](http://www.UDLL.com)

CV Perry as our builder.

Because Mark and I both work out of our home, we needed to modify the builder's floor plan in order to accommodate two home offices. As we interviewed the builder, it became apparent that he was not familiar with universal design and we needed to involve the services of an architect. We interviewed several architects before selecting Patrick Manley.

Manley took the existing builder's floor plan and tried to "shoe horn" the floor plan we had worked on. This

process was unsuccessful. We started designing our home from scratch.

We continued to work with Manley to convey our needs for space. Revisions continued for months and it was obvious that the design for the kitchen and bath needed an expert.

I contacted Mary Jo Peterson, a nationally known kitchen and bath universal design specialist. In January 2005, we met at her presentation in Orlando at the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) International Builders' Show. We consulted with



**Rosemarie tries out the ironing center from Iron-a-Way.**

her by telephone and e-mail for several months to design the kitchen and baths.

My mastermind group suggested that our home be used as a national demonstration model for universal design. As a speaker, trainer, consultant, and advocate for people with disabilities, it seemed obvious to them that I would be a great national spokesperson for universal design.

As the floor plans were nearing completion, we contacted national product manufacturers to discuss their willingness to partner with us. A very interested set of initial sponsors offered their products and services to the home.



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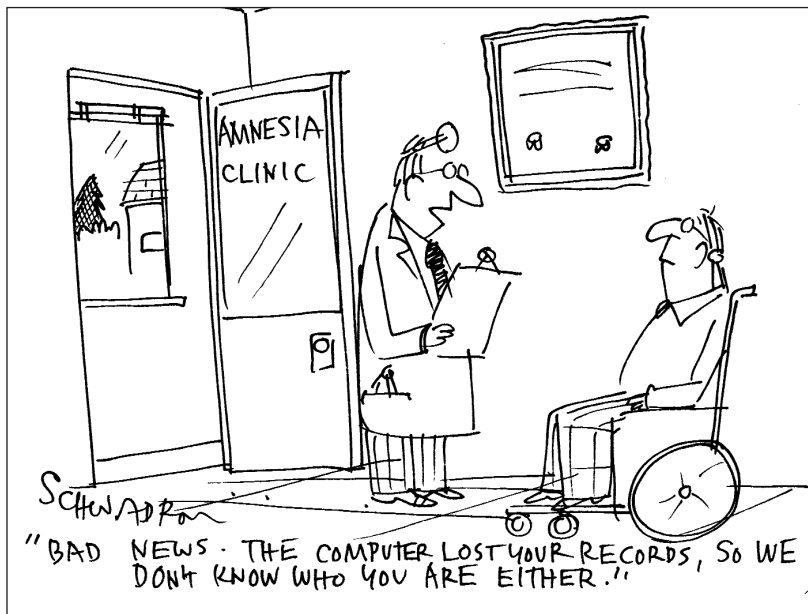
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As the project grew, we hired a marketing consultant to help us create a sponsorship menu of opportunities. He named the home the Universal Design Living Laboratory.

In January 2006, Mark and I returned to the builder's show. We evaluated products based on: ease-of-use from a seated position, healthfulness, design, quality, use of renewable/recycled materials, and low energy use. I spent four days in the exhibit hall evaluating products. I discovered that a KitchenAid side-by-side refrigerator was easier for me to access food if the shelves fully extended. I also knew that the Gaggenau side hinged oven was superior to a bottom



hinged oven regarding accessibility and safety.

My eyes lit up when I saw the Gaggenau in-counter steamer. This unit is a module that enables a person to steam food, slow cook, or boil pasta. Installing a pot filler over the steamer makes it easy to add water. There is a drain in the bottom so cleanup is safe and easy. No more worrying about how to drain a hot pot of noodles!

This house will help familiarize consumers with universal design and technology. \*

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