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UNIVERSAL DESIGN LIVING LABORATORY, A SHOWPIECE OF ACCESSIBLE HOMES

Posted on July 5th, 2012 by [ERC](#)



Rosemarie Rossetti is proof that persistence and dedication pays off.

Rosemarie and her husband, Mark Leder, loved to bike, ski, hike, dance, and play racquetball. During a biking trip to celebrate their anniversary in 1998, a tree fell on Rosemarie, resulting in a spinal cord injury that left her paralyzed from the waist down. After weeks in the hospital, Rosemarie returned home only to find much of her house to be inaccessible. Frustrated with the inability to use her own home and unable to find an existing one that met

her needs, Rosemarie and Mark embarked on a journey to build a universal design home.

Although they began with the goal of simply building a home for their family, after years of research, Mark and Rosemarie decided it was best to share their work and discoveries. They created the **Universal Design Living Laboratory**, a national demonstration home that features elements of universal design.

According to the **Center for Universal Design** at North Carolina State University, universal design is defined as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Universal design is intended to be accessible to the widest range of abilities, ages, and sizes. By creating more homes with universal design elements, more people can remain in their own homes as they age and change in ability.

Universal design elements in housing can be valuable to all people, not just those who have disabilities. For example, a universal design home has a step-free entrance. A step-free entrance is useful in a variety of ways. In addition to providing access to people with mobility impairments, it can also aid a person using a baby stroller or delivering a large package or appliance into the home. A zero grade entrance is also an element of the **visitability movement** and similar to accessibility requirements for multifamily homes.

In addition to providing a high level of accessibility, the Universal Design Living Laboratory is a certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) home. Rosemarie and Mark take pride in their home not just being equipped with accessibility features, but also being aesthetically beautiful and comparable to any other home. After 14 years of commitment and effort, Rosemarie and Mark have opened the door to their home, and hopefully, the eyes of developers and other individuals looking to build homes with universal design in mind.

Categorized as [Disability Rights](#), [Fair Housing](#), [Uncategorized](#)

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