



VOL. 67, No. 6

PLAINVIEWOLDBETHPAGEHERALD.COM

APRIL 20 - 26, 2022 • ANTON MEDIA GROUP

Special Sections Inside:

Anton
Auto guide

\$1.00

George To The Rescue Comes To Plainview

**TYLER
MROCZEK**

editorial@antonmediagroup.com

Following a tragic skiing accident in March 2021 that left her paralyzed from the neck down, 21-year-old Rebecca Koltun and her family received a generous all-volunteer renovation to their home in Plainview.

The extensive upgrades improved accessibility around the house for Koltun, who travels using a motorized wheelchair upon the completion of many months of physical therapy. Since her accident, she has been in and out of hospitals, rehabilitation facilities and temporary housing, though her strength and kindness has never faltered.

The project was launched and funded by George Oliphant, host of NBC's home renovation show *George to the Rescue*, who commended Koltun's contagious positivity. Oliphant recruited designer Steven Andersen and national contractor JRM Construction Management to assist with redesigning and reconstructing this Plainview family's home.

"A big reason we wanted to work on this project had to do with Rebecca," shared Andersen, who serves as the Principal of the New York City design studio Montroy



Rebecca Koltun

(Photo courtesy Help Hope Live)

Andersen DeMarco. "Our only focus was giving Rebecca more accessibility not only inside the house but also outside, too. I wanted to do anything I could to make her life better."

Everyone involved in the deconstruction and rebuilding process worked for five months to ensure the home was mobile, comfortable and homey to the Koltun clan.

"As an employee-owned firm, our company has always been committed to not only excellence in construction, but excellence in citizenship as well," JRM Construction President Joseph Romano said. "We have previously worked on a pro-bono project with George Oliphant before and were

excited to again have the opportunity to come together for this worthy cause."

The Koltuns' two-story home rests upon a steep slope, which is common for local architecture. However, its interior had multi-level transitions from room to room, which included narrow hallways and multiple sets of steps and stairs.

"When I first met Scott [Koltun], I didn't even know what to say to him," Andersen explained. "You know, I'm a father myself. I mean, my heart just grew. It was at that point I realized I would do anything to ensure this family had a better environment—a safer environment to live in and be as happy as they could. It was well worth the time and effort."

The entire first floor was completely reconstructed by transforming what used to be the living room into Rebecca's newly designed bedroom. The designers extended her bedroom's adjacent bathroom door by four feet and added ADA-compliant features including a barrier-free shower.

"I was able to have some input on overall themes and designs," Rebecca explained. "But the rest was pretty much up to them. It was a huge weight lifted off of our back. My favorite part is the inclusion of an elevator, which gives me the ability to travel upstairs where my parents' room is."

Additionally, all the home's hallways and doors have been expanded, the backyard

was completely redesigned and various state-of-the-art Amazon Alexa voice-operated systems have been installed throughout the home.

Throughout the renovation process, the *George to the Rescue* team captured every moment of the transformation for the April 4 episode that aired on WNBC. Oliphant's work received an outpouring of support from the entire community, with hundreds donating to the project and the Koltun family.

"The community support made a huge difference to our survival," said Rebecca's mother Audrey. "It's incredible—people we know, people we don't know from all over the place. We're more than willing to accept the help."

The Koltun family says anyone who wants to help Rebecca throughout her journey can donate to her "Help Hope Live" site. All proceeds from the site are used for Koltun's medical expenses, including her wheelchair and physical therapy.

"When faced with devastation or tragedy, it is important to keep moving forward no matter how difficult it is," Koltun smiled before adding, "There will always be a light at the end of the tunnel, even if it is not how you wanted it to be. You just have to keep moving forward."

—Tyler Mroczek is a contributing writer for Anton Media Group