

St. Mary of Sorrows Knights of Columbus Council 8600  
April Improve a Home  
Program Overview

April Improve a Home (AIH) is the Council's premier Community Program effort in which we plan and provide no-cost skilled, and unskilled (but ready to learn) volunteers from our Council and the parish to assist parishioners and other community members with their home upkeep needs. Projects involve general interior and exterior repairs/maintenance and small-scale carpentry, electrical, plumbing, home safety, landscape/yard and painting activities.

The AIH program, which falls under the auspices of the Council's Community Program Chair (CPC), enables our Council to assist those who are in need for any reason, but especially when physical, intellectual or financial circumstances make home upkeep difficult.

Typically, based on nominated projects and availability of Council volunteers, AIH completes 6-8 projects for older, disadvantaged, or disabled parishioners / community members. Special consideration is given to the needs of Marian Homes and the needs of the parish facilities themselves.

AIH typically includes some 40 to 50 Council members and family members, especially teens. Projects usually take 4-6 hours to complete and, with up-front planning, take between 300 and 400 hours of volunteer effort.

The AIH program involves a detailed planning/needs assessment phase and a project execution phase.

Project Planning/Needs Assessment Phase

- The target date for completion of AIH projects is the second-to-last Saturday each April.
- In early March, the AIH Program Coordinator (AIH PC) generates and submits a news item to the Parish Weekly Bulletin coordinator (Cindy Bevilacqua/ [cindyb@stmaryofsorrows.org](mailto:cindyb@stmaryofsorrows.org)) describing the program and seeking submissions of support requests from parishioners.
- The weekly bulletin item includes a weblink for submission of support requests and identifies the primary and alternate POC for this effort.
- The AIH PC also discusses the effort at Council meetings to get the word out informally and encourage volunteers to step forward.
- As support requests are received and evaluated by the AIH PC, he seeks input from CPC and prior Project Captains who may have some prior knowledge of projects to define the scope and potential resource requirements.
- Collectively, those individuals begin to develop between 6-8 projects based on need and available resources. Scope is defined by the CPC and APC and communicated to the Project Captains by the AIH APC. Identified Project Captains help define more detailed requirements that include identifying material, labor and necessary skills and communicate them to the AIH APC

- The AIH PC solicits Project Captains and volunteers via Signup Genius on the Council website and assigns them as members of each project team.

### Project Execution Phase

- On AIH project day, all Knights participating in the program meet at the Council Hall located at the Historic Church on Route 123 at 0800. The AIH PC and/or CPC Chair welcome attendees and issue instructions and project listings. He also provides a brief orientation stressing the need for safe operations and avoiding injury or damage.
- Team Captains then assemble their volunteers, verify availability of tools and other resources, and head to job sites.
- As projects are underway, Council volunteers prepare and deliver lunches to each work site to enable the work to proceed uninterrupted.
- The AIH PC and CPC Chair will be co-located at the Council Hall, available by phone or text, to maintain situational awareness of project completion status, respond to any issues that arise, deconflict schedules, and re-allocate resources as needed.

Realizing that not all projects can be completed in April, Council 8600 also operates a year-round “Helping Hands” program to undertake AIH-type projects during the rest of the year. Availability of help is determined and coordinated by the APC. Project requests are solicited in the weekly bulletin on a recurring basis throughout the year.