

TruBlue franchise helps Denver seniors age in place safely

For Paul and Danny Kullman, TruBlue Home Service Ally was the perfect fit when they were looking for a franchise opportunity. The home repair and preventative maintenance company and their technicians are certified as Senior Service Specialists and they provide home safety assessments, senior home modifications and general upkeep services.

This mission aligned with the Kullmans and addressed the issues they saw firsthand in their own families. “As you see your parents and grandparents age, you realize how much better quality of life they can have just by a little bit at a time in fixing and supplementing the house,” Paul said. A former diplomat, Paul has 30 years of experience as a handyman, which made becoming a franchisee a perfect fit and filled a need in the community, and timely, as September is Fall Prevention Month.

“There’s not much help out there. There are senior care companies that take care of the senior, but there aren’t that many companies out there that are taking care of the senior’s home and that’s where we come in to help,” Paul added.

For the elderly, staying independent in their own homes is known as aging in place, and this approach helps people avoid the expense of nursing homes. However, that means the home must be maintained. On average, in the United States, a household has 22 issues that need to be addressed; these are typical jobs for a handyman, such as small leaks that can become a big problem, Paul said. The number of repairs in the homes of seniors increases, and addressing these issues is crucial to maintaining a good quality of life.

Homes are assessed for free and then a modification plan is created. “We will put in ramps or grab bars, railings, stair lifts, or cutouts in bathtubs, so they don’t have to lift their legs so high,” he said. Modifications can also be as simple as installing brighter light bulbs to illuminate stairs, which helps seniors avoid falls.

Not all the work is related to safety alterations. Paul said that a third of the work is helping do-it-yourselfers or finishing work for another handyman who just disappeared or didn’t do a good job.

“It gives us, you know, a bad reputation as handymen, but that’s where we come in. And that’s what we’re really pushing here, is that we want to make sure that people know there are really good handymen out there,” Paul said. There are four technicians employed at his shop and Paul himself will go out to job sites.

“I pride myself in the fact that my technicians are excellent, and actually sometimes they go above and beyond because I have to balance, you know, the money and the They have their own subculture. It's fascinating to be around those guys,” Paul added.

Ultimately, the job is more than just about maintenance; it's about connection. “Danny and I, what we love about this is it's not just a job, it's not just the challenge of taking on a new business, but it's this mission of helping people, in particular, seniors. Many times, the handyman visit is the highlight of the week. They want to chat with the technician a little bit and offer some coffee or something like that,” Paul said.

The Kullman's TruBlue franchise serves Denver, North Denver, and East Denver. As new franchisees, Paul and Danny have reached out to AgeWise, a Colorado-based nonprofit that assists seniors with transportation, senior care and home modifications, as well as AARP and senior providers.

“If the house is not well-maintained, the provider might stumble on the steps or slip on the carpet or not have light when they go down to the basement. So these senior care providers want this to be done for them as well as the senior,” Paul said.

Work requests come through the TruBlue Ally website, from family and friends, word-of-mouth, Yelp, Thumbtack and Home Depot, which consistently provides two to three leads a day.

“Somebody might buy a sink. But they don't know how to install the sink. Home Depot will notify me that they might need help, and then I contact them and say, hey, I understand you bought the sink from Home Depot. If you need some help, I'll be willing to come out there and fix it for you and install it for you,” Paul said.

The Kullmans are in it for the long haul and have given themselves three years and beyond to build up the business, with the hope of leaving it to their children one day.

“It is a bit like the trades and the guilds of the old days. We see a lot of young people out there unemployed and frustrated and sitting behind screens and not really having a purpose, and at least this will give some direction to our kids,” Danny said.

Until then, Paul and Danny will continue their mission to help Coloradoans, young and old, enjoy and stay in their homes longer.