



## LI BUSINESS

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# GRANT PLAN HELPS LI SENIORS 'AGE IN PLACE'

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Long Island seniors who need to modify their homes so they can stay safe can get help from United Way of Long Island's new \$1 million federal grant.

The Deer Park-based group expects to make home improvements for about 250 lower-income homeowners over three years, starting next year.

The grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Older Adults Home Modification Program will pay for equipment such as grab bars, railings, lever-handled doorknobs and faucets and nonslip strips for tubs, showers and stairs. The aim is to help seniors to continue living at home instead of moving to elder-care facilities, the agency said.

Upgrades also could include ramps and chair lifts if needed, the organization said.

To be eligible, recipients must be 62 or older, own their home and earn no more than \$66,450 for one person or up to \$75,960 for a two-person household, United Way of Long Island said. The limits are higher for larger households.

There is "a tidal wave of need" among seniors on Long Island, said Rick Wertheim, se-



Carolyn and Lorenza King at home in Shirley with an air purifier funded by a grant to help lower-income seniors age in place.

nior vice president for housing at United Way of Long Island. The funding, he said, will allow the group to make "meaningful, small modifications that enable people to age naturally without having to leave their homes."

The group will send occupational therapists into seniors' homes to check for hazards and health problems, and its workers will make the upgrades.

Carolyn King, 65, and her hus-

band Lorenza King Sr., 63, got help from a separate United Way of Long Island program called Safe at Home for Seniors, aimed at providing older Long Islanders with safety equipment, help with heating and grocery bills and other assistance during the pandemic.

COVID-19 "has only exacerbated the issues for seniors that wish to remain at home and age in place," said Craig Fligstein, United Way of Long

Island's chief grant officer.

The local group installed bathroom grab bars and a medical-grade air purifier in the Kings' home in Shirley, where the couple lives with their son Lorenza Jr., 28, who has special needs.

Carolyn King said she has arthritis and her husband has lymphoma, and the grab bars help them both get in and out of their tub safely, while the air purifier reduces her allergy symptoms and filters the air to protect them when caregivers visit.

"The air purifier came in quite handy," she said. "It recirculates the air, it cleans the air and it helps my breathing, and it's good to have with COVID."

United Way also plans to upgrade the loose wooden railing outside their home, the group said.

King said it's important for her and her husband and their son to remain in the house.

"It's a home that my husband and I bought together," she said. "We worked to keep it, worked very hard to keep it." Plus, she said, "this is a home for my son. God forbid something happens to us, my son will have a safe dwelling. It's a blessing."

For more information, go to [unitedwayli.org](http://unitedwayli.org) or call 211 in Nassau or Suffolk counties or 631-940-3700.