

Forklift project promotes home improvement

Low-income resident can have access to affordable materials

by Jeffrey K. Lyles

Staff Writer

A Community Forklift project has been established in Edmonston with the aim of making renovation of homes more affordable to low-income residents and keeping reusable items out of the waste stream.

Area property managers, construction companies and the non-profit Sustainable Community Initiatives are among supporters of the project that opened Nov. 17.

The forklift is at 4671 Tanglewood Drive and is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday to Saturday or available by appointment by calling 301-985-5180.

"We receive donations from people or businesses that would normally dispose of [materials] in a landfill and we actually save property owners money in waste hauling," said Jim Schulman, head of the project, who described the forklift as a mission of community revitalization.

"We then sell the items at half or less than half the cost of virgin materials. Also, the local government

would have less materials to pick for dumping, so it's a win-win-win situation," Schulman said.

Much of the materials come from projects in which homes slated to be torn down are taken apart in the reverse order of construction.

Schulman estimates that 50 percent of the demolishing work is done by Deconstruction Services LLC, a northern Virginia-based business.

The materials at the forklift come as donations by construction, renovation, demolition contractors, facilities management companies, government agencies and hardware stores.

Such items include lumber, roofing, flooring, concrete blocks and masonry, siding, paint, plumbing fixtures, working appliances and light fixtures, insulation, windows, cabinets, doors and radiators. Hardware, trim, mantels, shelving and mirrors are also accepted at the facility.

Although it opened during the slow construction period of winter, Schulman said business at the facility has been steady with customers purchasing thousands of dollars in lumber and cabinets.

"We intend to make it a destination spot for people who can come, hang out and listen to music, and so forth," Schulman said. "We also want to [make it a place] where people can take courses on how to build with these materials."

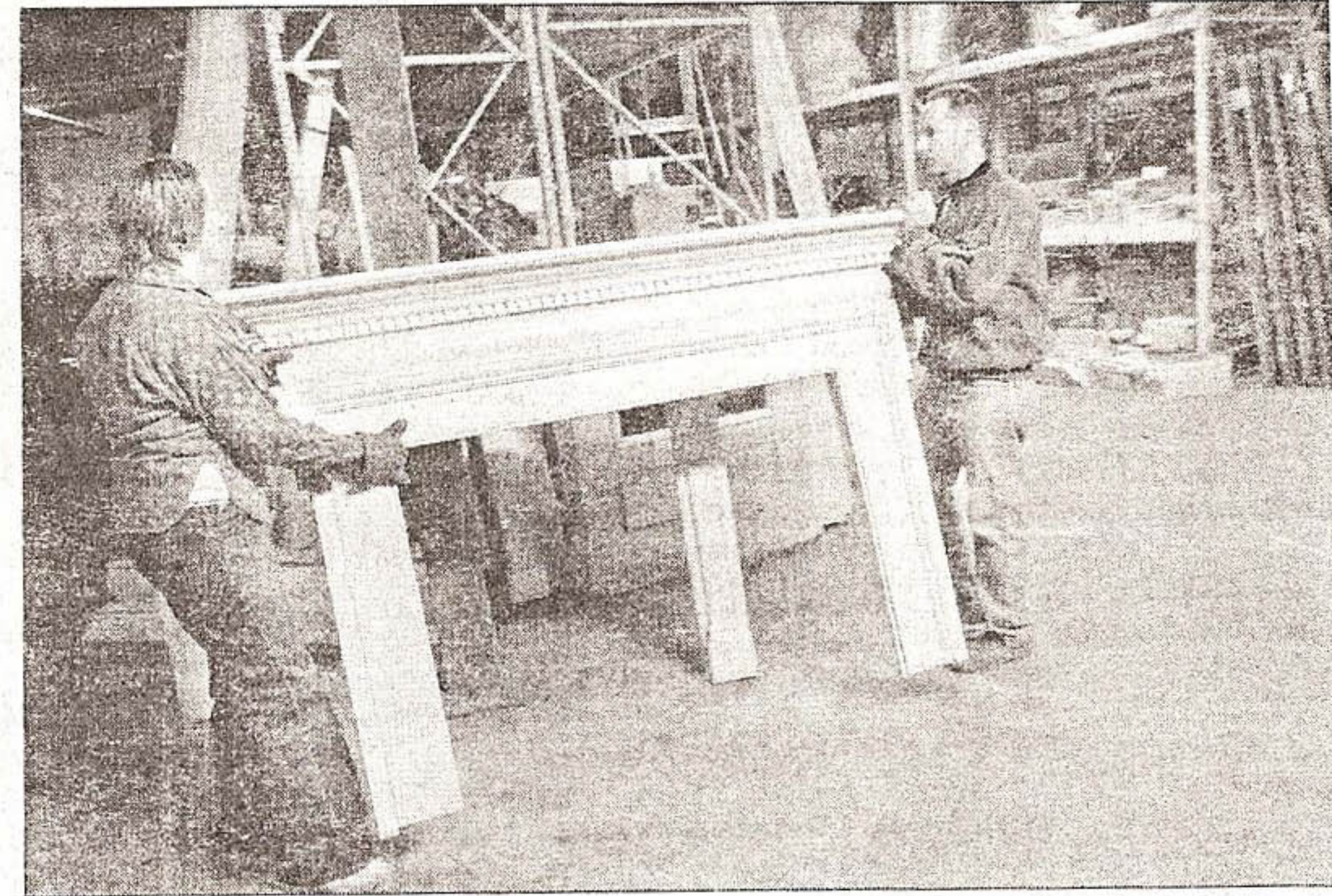
Mount Rainier resident Joseph Atkins has already taken advantage of musical aspect of the CF with his band performing there in late December.

"We decorated [the place] and had a barbecue-like party," Atkins said. "Part of the goal is to use it as a community gathering place with social events," he said.

"We are getting ready to build our own house too so we are looking forward to going over there and buying lots of fixtures, plumbing and cabinets at greatly reduced prices."

Schulman said the CF was established in Edmonston due to the town's proximity to the District and because it would help support the Port Towns Community Development Corporation.

The corporation helped write a low-interest loan for the project that was submitted to the Maryland De-



Allison Pasek/The Gazette

Community Forklift employees Ruthie Mundell and John Zydler move a mantle piece from a deconstructed home into the company's warehouse in Edmonston. CF sells everything from lumber and hardwood flooring to appliance and furniture.

partment of Housing and Community Development.

Colmar Manor Mayor Diana Fennell said the forklift is another example of the Port Towns' rising stock as it adds a new business to the four towns.

"It shows our area is on the move

as owners see there is a good opportunity here in being a part of the Port Towns," Fennell said.

"It's also very good for us to have a business in Edmonston."

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