

# What does it take to make ramp teams successful?

## Tips from the Redstone Arsenal Chapter of the U.S. Army Warrant Officers Ramp Team

Six years and 70 ramps built, the U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association Ramp Team definitely has a working blueprint for a successful ramp team. The Warrant Officers Association has made a commitment to build one ramp a month. Even with that commitment, the CASA office still has 42 ramps waiting that could take 6 months or longer to get built. In order to help our neighbors be freed from their homes, we need more teams like the Warrant Officers and our other loyal ramp teams.

Sitting down with Johnnie Walters, President of the chapter and ramp team member; Max Bennett, the man in charge of cutting for the team; Johnnie Keeter, the carpenter; and Joe Shiver, their fearless leader, was inspirational and insightful. Understanding the effect of having these ramps built for seniors and homebound in Madison County keeps this team building.

After six years they will tell you, they are going to build ramps as long as they are able.



So, what does it take to make a ramp team? The first is a desire to help those in need in our community. As Max points out, this is an “opportunity to do something good and feel good after you do it” and it is a “natural fit” for the missions of most organizations. The team points out that once they decided as an organization to build ramps they included the builds into their groups’ schedule. This way members knew to expect this project in planning their everyday lives. The team also advise you to be prepared to dedicate time to training. As Max says, “nobody expects you to come out the first day and know how to build a ramp.” Training gives you insight into the “tricks of the trade” from seasoned CASA ramp builders and provides you with a chance to organize your team better.

One of the most important steps is to designate

a team leader for your group. Johnnie W. says, “the team leader is the spark plug that keeps the movement going and keeps the service project institutionalized within the organization.” As a note, if you are the one bringing this opportunity to your organization be prepared to be named “team leader,” just ask Joe! Joe brought the opportunity to Warrant Officers after meeting a CASA staff member at an event and as the team lead he says, “I pre-build the sections, I pick the ramps that we do, and I pick up all the supplies to bring out to the site.” This is why he is their FEARLESS leader!



Your group can be as successful as our current ramp teams by utilizing the structure already in place for your established organization such as your church, Sunday School class, veterans group, fraternal organization, etc. Limiting each ramp build in time and frequency keeps your volunteers from burning out. The Warrant Officers spend four hours each month, and as Johnnie K. says, “we have fun doing it.” Getting involved in other CASA programs helps in maintaining your commitment to the mission of CASA. Joe says, “We are going to get some volunteer hours in with CASA one way or another.” Other than ramps the team helps with designing ramps, weatherizing homes during TEMP\$ and various other projects that CASA clients may need help with occasionally. Joe says, “You just can’t say no [to the CASA staff] when they ask.”

Ramp team members are heroes to CASA clients and to the CASA staff. In Max’s words, “Stop talking it and start doing something!”



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