



Builder Tony Pourhassan works on a deck Tuesday in Sharpsburg. He founded the Georgia Redevelopment Foundation to help homeowners keep up home maintenance. Johnny Crawford [jrcrawford@ajc.com](mailto:jrcrawford@ajc.com)

# Nonprofit gives builder new goals

**His foundation helps struggling homeowners.**

**He's used own money to pay for repairs, supplies.**

By **Christopher Quinn**  
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Tony Pourhassan, a builder and developer, took some hits in the last few years, but he still felt lucky and blessed when renovating homes after floods and tornadoes in Georgia and Alabama.

So Pourhassan started the Georgia Redevelopment Foundation, a nonprofit to help financially strained homeowners fix their homes and keep them livable during the economic crisis.

Attorney and friend Lawrence Kasmien said he saw the effect on Pourhassan from working on people's homes during the 2009 metro Atlanta floods and 2011's tornadoes that

began in Alabama and swept into Georgia.

"He realized it was really powerful and more moving to him than he thought it would be," Kasmien said. "We talked a great deal about the devastation and the trouble that people were having, fighting with their insurance companies over compensation while having no roof on their house."

Pourhassan helped some homeowners in need by giving them below-cost repairs or sometimes paying for supplies or work out of his own pocket. But his strained business, Highlight Homes, has been reduced

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to minor jobs and renovations more than new home-building, so his money ran out.

"I am doing anything from changing a light fixture to any type maintenance on a house," Pourhassan said. "We do what we have to do to survive."

He figured the goodwill that other builders or material suppliers showed by donating goods or time to help him with repairs for those in need would be amplified if there were a nonprofit set up to funnel their donations and allow them to get a tax write-off. So he created the Georgia Redevelopment Foundation, which received its tax-exempt status in December.

Through it, the work — like what Pourhassan did for Dana Zahler of Woodstock — can continue.

Zahler's home flooded to a level of about 3-feet high during 2009.

"We came back the next day and had to kick in the walls and tear out the drywall before mold took hold," she said.

**Builder** continued on A11

# Owners can keep homes

## Builder

continued from A9

Zahler was finishing college as a student teacher and had no extra money, and she was having trouble getting assistance. She heard from others

about Pourhassan and contacted him, pleading her case.

"They were out there in two days," and sheet-rocked her downstairs at no cost to her after things dried out, she said.

"Without Tony, I wouldn't have a home to live in and it probably would have all molded," she said.

Pourhassan said now that the foundation is set up, he will help choose a board to run it and he hopes to find a warehouse

where donated materials can be kept. He plans to continue running Highlight Homes while helping direct the new charity.

"Home building is the only way I know to help [those in need]," he said.

"I don't want to just hand them money, but if I can help somebody keep a roof over their head to keep from water leaking in or get energy-efficient products, then this will be a way to do that. There are a lot of things we can do to help people."