

Stranded by washout, flooded with kindness in Freeport

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By Matt Byrne Staff Writer | @mattbyrnePPH | 207-791-6303

Elizabeth Toothaker received an early Christmas present this year, and it arrived by the truckload: 700 cubic yards of dirt, sand and rock, enough to fill 50 dump trucks.

Contractors and businesses from around the state rallied behind Toothaker and her neighbor, Arleen Siegert-Young, to rebuild a dirt road that leads to their homes on Turkey Ridge Lane in Freeport. The private road, the only way to get to or from their houses, washed out last month during a record downpour. Fixing it would have cost \$85,000, a financially crippling sum for Toothaker and Siegert-Young, whose homes are assessed at less than \$150,000 and \$215,000, respectively.

Additional Images



Ray Clark and Derek Alves of Main Line Fence install a guard rail Monday along the rebuilt private road leading to two homes in Freeport. Nearly two dozen businesses donated labor, materials or money to help the homeowners after a storm washed out part of their access road. *John Patriquin/Staff Photographer*



Andy Kittredge of CPM Constructors spent weeks reaching out to fellow contractors and business associates, listed on the sign behind him, to join the effort to help the two Freeport homeowners.

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"This is a huge Christmas present," Toothaker said. "This is at least a \$50,000 or \$100,000 gift. Who does that?"

Although nearly two dozen companies ultimately banded together to rebuild the road, it was Andy Kittredge, a project manager at Freeport's CPM Constructors, who saw media accounts of Toothaker's plight and offered to help. He didn't make any immediate promises, Toothaker recalled.

"He said he couldn't guarantee anything, but to give him a chance," she said. "We of course didn't have much of a choice. So we said, 'Please, try.'"

Kittredge spent three weeks reaching out to fellow contractors and business associates who could donate time, labor and materials.

"When we saw the devastation over there first-hand ... it was obviously a huge expense for these two people," said Bob Walton, a project manager at Ray Labbe & Sons of Brunswick, whose company provided the 700 cubic yards of fill and trucked it from their yard about five miles away. "I think they were kind of at a dead end."

The road that washed out spans a small gully and a stream. The old road went over a 4-foot-diameter culvert that allowed the stream to pass through. But when 6.5 inches of rain fell in a matter of hours between Aug. 13 and Aug. 14, the creek swelled and the culvert was likely blocked by debris. A second, 3-foot-diameter relief pipe was quickly overwhelmed as well, and the water backed up behind the road before washing it away sometime during the night.

Toothaker and Siegert-Young awoke the next morning to find they were all but stranded at their wooded homes.

Other roads in town were damaged in the storm, but public money, through the town or the state, cannot be used to rebuild a private way, leaving Toothaker scrambling. A friend started an online crowd funding campaign, drawing media attention.

Then, a call from Kittredge.

Although Kittredge said the project wasn't complex, it did require some technical know-how. That was donated by engineering firm E.J. Prescott, which was working with CPM on rebuilding the Martin's Point Bridge between Portland and Falmouth.

Kittredge said the engineers recommended a bigger culvert – 6 feet in diameter, which they then donated to the project. A second culvert, recovered from the old road, was installed as well as a relief pipe.

Doug Tourtelotte Excavation, of Bowdoinham, donated a bulldozer and a truck to grade the fill, and Main Line Fence completed a guardrail on Monday.

Toothaker did not get her hopes up that Kittredge would come through until dump trucks began arriving at her home last week.

"You prepare yourself for the worst and you kind of deal with it," she said. "I didn't expect to get an outpouring from all these companies, and certainly didn't expect one guy to step up. I don't know what I can do to pay these companies back."