



Giving Back With Insulation

A New York contractor got the opportunity to volunteer with an organization that builds homes for veterans. It's an honor for Johns Manville insulation to be part of the project.

Organized chaos. That's how Rich Bender described a recent home build his company, Northwind Insulation, was involved in. But chaotic in a good way. Crews built a home for a United States military veteran in just under three weeks, through the nonprofit A Soldier's Journey Home. And Johns Manville insulation is proud to have been a part of the project.

Northwind Insulation, co-owned by Bender and John Pokrandt, is based out of Orchard Park, New York, and works mostly in western and central New York. When A Soldier's Journey Home (ASJH) started pulling resources together for a home in West Falls, New York, they contacted Northwind "out of the blue one day" and explained the project.

"They told me what they are about and what they were doing, and we jumped right into it," Bender said. "We definitely wanted to do this project. My partner and I are very much into backing our Armed Forces and everything in our country that stands for. This home was for a man who was shot, lost a leg and was in a coma – if we can give something back to somebody who sacrificed that much for us, we would do it in a heartbeat."

PRODUCT

Fiberglass Batts and Climate Pro®

LOCATION

West Falls, NY

INSTALLER

Northwind Insulation





A Soldier's Journey Home

ASJH was born post- 9/11, when a group of New York firefighters wanted to give back after receiving overwhelming support across the country. They started with disaster-relief construction projects and then their efforts evolved. Firefighters across the nation brought their skills, time and dedication together to build mortgage-free, specially adapted homes for veterans with disabilities.

Today, the group is 100% volunteer-driven and is a 501(c)3 made primarily of current and retired firefighters and veterans. Each year, more than 100 volunteers from across the country join together to build a fully accessible home in just two weeks.

To date, ASJH has built homes for disabled veterans in Georgia, Tennessee, Illinois, Texas, Ohio, Maine, Kentucky, North Carolina, Louisiana and now New York.

Building The 2026 Home

"This project was the craziest thing as an insulator," Bender said. "Normally we do this every day and you show up at a job with four or five guys and you're complaining that people are in the way. With this, there were sometimes 60-100 people in and outside and nobody ever complained! Everyone working together. They started on May 13 and handed over the keys on May 30. Seventeen days to build a 2,800 square foot house was unbelievable."

Bender described how there were so many contractors working on a variety of projects concurrently. Northwind installed Johns Manville R-21 batts in the walls and used R-49 Climate Pro® in the attic.

"We've been a JM customer since we started our business in 1993," Bender said. "The product is so much more durable than others and stays together. When you get a bag of R-19 insulation, you know it's going to be 6" and not compressed. And Climate Pro is a fantastic material to blow."

Bender approached his JM reps about getting the product donated for the project, and then Northwind donated the manpower and machinery to make the installation happen.

"I was on the jobsite maybe four or five days and everybody there was so cool," Bender said. "The recipient's dad was on the jobsite, talking to everybody and giving everyone a hug. It was so heartfelt."

About Northwind Insulation

Bender and Pokrandt started the company in 1993 and today have about 15 employees. The company does mostly residential and apartment complex work. Northwind also offers fireplace work and fire caulking, as well as closet storage and shelving solutions.

For JM customer support or technical assistance, call 1-800-644-4013.



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