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A call for help answered

Leaking tank gets response from strangers



B WATERBURY Bob DeVito said he's not usually one to ask for help. But when the disabled survivor of two different cancers learned he needed a new oil tank that would cost close to \$3,000 he and husband Tony Patton just didn't have, he brought his need to the fundraising website GoFundMe.

"I've always been the giver, not the give-EE in my life," DeVito said Tuesday. "Asking for help or being



From left, Bob DeVito and Anthony Patton stand next to an oil tank that will replace the tank at their home in Waterbury Tuesday. DeVito is a male breast cancer survivor and will get an oil tank donated from a local company.

helped kind of shook me." But what happened after he started the online campaign shook him even more, he said.

That campaign, titled "HELP! The Oil Tank Is

Leaking," raised \$1,750 and was shared nearly 150 times before another hero came to his rescue — for a second time.

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OIL: Cancer survivor feels warmth

Cheri Ambrose, co-founder of the Male Breast Cancer Coalition, of which DeVito, a survivor of the disease, was an original member, happened upon his GoFundMe. Then, she got on the phone.

"Cheri called and found a company willing to donate their time, and a supplier to donate the tank," DeVito said. "She made one phone call and within the hour she had these arrangements made."

That company was Superior HVAC and Tank Removal, where owner Joe Riggi agreed to install for free a new oil tank donated by the city-based FW Webb Co. He then helped secure a donation of enough oil to fill the tank from Superior Oil, the company he recently sold.

"The way this girl Cheri called me saying the guy is in desperate need, he's been through a lot," Riggi said. "So I said, all right, we'll help him out."

All the donors who raised the \$1,750 online have agreed to allow him to put the money toward fuel costs, DeVito said.

DeVito first met Ambrose as he sought information about male breast cancer after his diagnosis.

Ambrose, of New Jersey, said she co-founded the or-

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ganization a few years ago after several friends had been diagnosed with male breast cancer, and she was unable to find substantive information about the disease online.

Her co-founder, she said, is a young Kansas man named Bret Miller who was diagnosed with the disease as a teenager, but didn't receive treatment until he was in his 20s because doctors didn't believe he had breast cancer. He had a mastectomy at age 24, she said.

DeVito said he spoke with Miller's mother, Peggy Miller, and became involved in male breast cancer awareness efforts.

"Men have breasts, too," he said. "I've been very vocal, very active in the community trying to get the word out."

But illness has prevented him from working, and even with his husband's two jobs, the replacement of the oil tank would have been a seri-

ous financial blow, he said, were it not for the efforts of Ambrose and the donations.

"I called Bob, and I thought the phone went dead. He was crying, and I said, 'Don't do that or I'm going to cry along with you,'" Ambrose said. "The way things are in the world, anyway, it's so incredible someone would go above and beyond."

The new oil tank and 200 gallons of fuel are expected to be delivered Friday.

"I'm floored. I've had my faith in humanity, the goodness of people restored," DeVito said. "Certainly it would make it a thankful Thanksgiving. Certainly a merry Christmas as well."

For information about the Male Breast Cancer Coalition, visit malebreastcancer-coalition.org.

Contact Mike Patrick at mpatrick@rep-am.com, on Twitter @RA_MikePatrick or on Facebook at RA. Mike Patrick.