

The Wichita Eagle

SATURDAY
AUGUST 25, 2001

VOLUNTEERS EMBRACE GRIEVING FAMILY

Kindness of strangers



Carmen Keeton sits on the porch of her house on Friday, shortly after her son's funeral. Keeton's son, Miguel Moreno, died Tuesday, about one week before the family was to move to a new home.

This was supposed to be a time of celebration for Carmen Keeton and her five children. The family was preparing to move into their new house, one of four being built in Habitat for Humanity's blitz build in southwest Wichita.

Then, Keeton's oldest child, 19-year-old Miguel Moreno, died on Tuesday.

But amid the worst tragedy that Keeton has endured, the spirit of giving has continued to embrace her family.

Volunteers from Koch Industries who are helping build Keeton's home started a drive to collect money to help cover the cost of Moreno's funeral.

In two days, the workers collected more than \$3,000.

Roger Ramseyer, director of community affairs at Koch, said the donations were mostly made by the 400 employees who volunteered to build the home.

"When somebody becomes a part of helping somebody build a house," he said, "they sort of feel a connection to them, even if they don't know them personally."

Kendall Riggs, a software developer at Koch, was one who donated.

"They were having a lot of hardships," he said, "so I was glad to be able to help out and maybe make things a little bit easier for them."

Keeton, who held her son's funeral on Friday, said she appreciated the donations to help her family.

"You don't know how my heart goes out to all those people," she said. "I don't know how to thank them. I'll always have them in my prayers, whether I know them or I don't."

Keeton said Moreno died from complications associated with cerebral palsy. Keeton was holding Miguel in her arms when he died Tuesday.

"I was just grabbing him and screaming, 'My baby, my baby, bring him back.'...He was gone and I knew it," Keeton said. "God was ready for him."

Keeton stayed at home to care for her son all his life. Because of his disability, Moreno was unable to speak or walk. He was nearly blind.

Moreno loved listening to music, his mother said. He would flash a wide smile when someone played a music box for him.

"He was a little angel to me," she said.

She'll be at her new house at 1621 W. 27th St. South on Wednesday morning for the

dedication of the four Habitat for Humanity homes.

Then she'll move in with her children, who range in age from 12 to 16, and her mother.

"This house is our dream," she said.

But there will be a part of her missing when she moves in.

Miguel.

"It's so sad that he didn't get to live in it," she said. "But he'll have a better home now, with God."



Carmen Keeton will move into this house on 27th Street South next week with her four children and her mother. The house was built as part of the Habitat for Humanity blitz build.