

Church team helps rebuild tornado-damaged home

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MATADOR—Brooke Brandon deals with a number of chronic illnesses that limit her mobility and require her to use a walker.

A year ago this month, she crouched in her hallway as a tornado ripped the roof off of much of her home in Matador, northeast of Lubbock.



A Texans on Mission team from Lawn Baptist Church in Taylor County—including Keith Whitehurst, Doug Jones and Karley Clearman—helped Brooke Brandon rebuild her home that was damaged by a tornado.

Last week, a Texans on Mission team from Lawn Baptist Church in Taylor

County helped Brandon rebuild.

“They did a tremendous amount of work that we had no clue how we were going to get done,” Brandon said. “They were working and sweating in the heat. ... It really was humbling and, of course, brought tears to my eyes and my family’s eyes.”

The Lawn Baptist team of 16 included men and women, teenagers and an 8-year-old boy, said Kristi Whitehurst, co-coordinator with her husband Keith of the church’s missions team. Lawn, population 311, is south of Abilene.

Rafael Muñoz, who coordinates Texans on Mission Rebuild, began communicating with Brandon and others in her extended family last August after the tornado. The family, over the past few months, secured donations and began the process of rebuilding.

They needed labor, and that’s where Texans on Mission Rebuild and Lawn Baptist Church came in, Muñoz said.

“Lawn Baptist Church team has turned the appearance of the home around and revived the sense of community in Matador,” Muñoz said. The team added new framing, roof decking, sheetrock, ductwork and electrical services.

First Baptist Church in Matador hosted the team from Lawn, providing lunch and dinner plus sleeping space in their building’s Sunday school rooms.

Demonstration of servanthood

Eddy Helms, pastor in Matador, said he “appreciated the example of servanthood that these people showed to our town. ... For them to come and demonstrate their servanthood and their heart was a blessing to us.”



Volunteers (left to right) Marissa Davis, Carolyn Jones and Mark Moore from Lawn Baptist Church work on the interior of a tornado-damaged home in Matador. (Photo / Eddy Helms)

Lawn's Keith Whitehurst said: "We do it for the glory of our God" and added that "our church is very mission minded."

Lawn Baptist makes a mission trip every summer. Keith Whitehurst has been participating 24 years, and the church's annual effort encourages families to take part, he said. When the Whitehurst kids were ages 7 and 11, they went with their parents on the trip. This year, the teenagers and child came with their parents.

"We like to take the kids with us, so we can teach them how to be a servant," Keith said.

The project in Matador required a lot of sweat, Pastor Helms said.

"It was hot. It was 102 one of the days they were on that roof and in the high 90s the other days," he said. "I know it was pretty tough on them."

Kristi Whitehurst said Lawn's mission trips are "not just about doing a job. It's about getting to know each other, ... sweating alongside the people we

go to church with on Sunday morning and getting to know them better. There's nothing better than that."

Muñoz hopes to put together another Texans on Mission team to finish the work, but the volunteer response already has captured the homeowner's heart.

"I'm a Christian and grew up in church and sang in the praise team," Brandon said, but being around the Lawn team "has made me want to do volunteer work when I get better," regarding health.

The three-bedroom, two-bath house is 60 years old and once belonged to Brandon's grandparents. Then it became the home of her mother, who died a few weeks before last year's tornado.

Brandon, her sister and cousins grew up in the house. "We did not want to see it leveled or demolished." Also, "I am disabled, and I have no place to live," without the house. Since the tornado she has lived with her sister, Amber, in Lubbock.

"There's still a lot of work to be done" on the house, Pastor Helms said. But the work of the Lawn Baptist team and Texans on Mission "was a godsend."