

Rio Grande Valley family sees bright future constructed just outside its doorstep

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PEÑITAS—Maria Luisa Morales' future was so close, it was right outside the front door of the aging one-room travel trailer that currently serves as home for her family of six.

Maria Luisa Morales Her future was constructed before her eyes, nail-by-nail, board-by-board by a group of volunteer women building her three-bedroom home.

Volunteer builders at work

Nearly 20 volunteers with Woman's Missionary Union of Texas worked from sunrise past sunset building the home for the Morales family from scratch. With sweat on their brows, the women raised the walls, built the roof, hung and painted the siding and finished out the home.

"I just can't believe this day has finally come," Morales said, looking at the construction. "The relief I have and the overwhelming sense of love and compassion is pouring out of me in tears."

Process strengthened the family

The team worked through Buckner International Domestic Missions, which identified a family who had earned enough points to qualify for a home build. Families earn points by participating in local Buckner Family Hope Center classes about managing finances, parenting and job skills, as well as volunteering to help others.

Through the process, the Morales family grew stronger and closer together.

“Maria Luisa’s husband, Alberto, worked so hard to become a better father. However, due to his work schedule, he was not able to spend quality time with his kids,” said Gabriel Flores, interim director of the Family Hope Center.

“Now, he is at a different workplace and through the 24/7 fatherhood class has more resources available to him, allowing him to be creative and present. As a result, the family is stronger, and their children are healthier physically and emotionally. The effort by WMU of Texas catapults the family even further forward into a bright future.”

☒ Peanut Scott, a volunteer from Cadiz Baptist Church in George West, helped build a house for the Morales family. It was her fifth homebuilding project through Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas and Buckner International. (Photo/Aimee Freston/Buckner International)

‘Blessed to serve’

Seeing Morales weep as she drove the first nail into the first wall of what will be her new house brought immense joy to Peanut Scott, a member of Cadiz Baptist Church in George West, who was part of her fifth house build through WMU of Texas and Buckner.

“I feel blessed that God uses me,” she said. “I feel blessed to go. I feel blessed to serve. Most of all, I feel blessed to be with kingdom people. It’s just amazing to see how God puts this all together.”

Lanelle Amann, a member of First Baptist Church in Smithville, echoed Scott’s thoughts. God has blessed her so much that she feels compelled to help others.

“If I call myself a child of the king and don’t have a heart to help to others,

I need to check myself," she said.

Developing skills

Many of the women like Scott came to their first Texas WMU/Buckner build with no construction experience. But through the years, they have developed their skills and believe God gives them the strength to work long hours in the heat.

Scott noted she is driven to "see the house come together, to see the family and the kids help out. God gives me more strength than I can imagine."

Through the house build, the Texas WMU team bonded. Strangers became close friends over a few days of work as they encouraged each other, prayed for each other and helped each other on the worksite.

Building relationships

"The main reason WMU of Texas goes to Peñitas to build a house for a family in need is to build relationships," Texas WMU Interim Director Carolyn Porterfield said.

"We believe it is through relationships that we can best share the love of Christ and demonstrate our love for our neighbors. Each family we have worked alongside has been a blessing. We are humbled to be part of God's work in the life of a family that is working hard to build a stronger future for their children."

"As we go back year after year, how it has changed that whole colonia," Scott said. "We all want to better ourselves, and so do they. I love working with the women of WMU. We're sisters. God puts us together, and it all works."

The Morales family is grateful for the hard work the women put into constructing the house.

“You have given us more than we could have ever imagined and only prayed for,” Alberto Morales said. “You have shown us so much love, and we pray the Lord bless you and keep you and your families always! To think that any of you—like Family Hope Center staff or the WMU—would give of your time and energy to sincerely care for my family and give them what I cannot just blows my mind, and I’m so grateful.”