

# Texans on Mission rebuild home for tornado victim

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Brooke Brandon still fearfully recalls the day—June 21, 2023—the tornado ripped through the West Texas town of Matador. Her town. Her home. The home her parents built in 1963, and she and her siblings inherited.

“All I did was scream and pray,” she said. “I had three cats and was screaming for the cats, and there was a dog out in the storage room. So, all I could think of was the animals, you know?”

She remembers hearing wind and the sound of glass breaking, but “I don’t remember anything else, really. It’s just really loud.”

The tornado touched down about nine miles away from the city and moved quickly over the Texas caprock into Matador, taking out businesses and homes.

She and her neighbors were directly in its path. The home of the couple who lived next door “was leveled,” she said. The wife didn’t survive, and the husband still suffers from injuries he sustained that day.



Tornado survivor Brooke Brandon and her uncle, Stan Martin, express appreciation for the volunteer labor and building supplies provided by Texans on Mission and Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock. (Texans on Mission Photo / Russ Dilday)

Sitting at her kitchen table, she is surrounded by the sounds of hammers, drills and sawing. Her kitchen floor is stripped to the baseboards, and the walls are unfinished sheetrock. Still, she's grateful for the construction all around her, calling it one of many "blessings after blessings."

The noises around her are being created by a dozen Texans on Mission Rebuild volunteers, a team from Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock. Bob Davis of Matador coordinated the project, and he is part of Texans on Mission Builders.

The volunteers worked for a week refurbishing the garage and storage room and placing cement board on the façade, adding to the work already provided by a similar team from Lawn Baptist Church.

## **'A bunch of blessings after blessings'**

"Well, all I can say is it's been a bunch of blessings after blessings," she said. Those blessings started when first responders and her uncle, Stan Martin, found her and the three cats and the dog, all alive, after the tornado. A support fund provided by neighbors helped, too, but the money soon ran out. leaving her with few options to rebuild her destroyed home.



Larry Childers from Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock works on a rebuilding project for a Matador resident. (Texans on Mission Photo / Russ Dilday)

But then Rafa Muñoz of Texans on Mission called "out of the blue and says, 'We're fixing to come up there and do some stuff,'" she recalled.

That "stuff" was teams working under the Texans on Mission Rebuild

banner showing up with materials and manpower to provide construction work.

She said the family was “running low on our money, the donation money we received, when all of a sudden, boom, it’s just happening. It’s been nothing but a miracle since then.

“Y’all just stepped in again and provided,” she continued.

“You can just see God working—the blessings that are here, that didn’t have to be here, but God has provided.”

The response has given her an “overwhelming feeling,” she explained.



Gary Beaty, team leader from Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock, works on a tornado-damaged home in Matador. (Texans on Mission Photo / Russ Dilday)

“Not overwhelming in a bad way, but of knowing a joy and happiness to know that,” she explained. “Because I feel like it’s a different situation for me. As far as I know, I’m the only person out of Matador that’s been able to get this type of help.

“It’s the flooding of people coming in and just working in the heat and whatever it is, and having the best attitudes about it as well,” she said about the Texans on Mission teams. “And it’s been fun being able to get to know them, too.”

Stan Martin also has helped the teams with the construction. He says the Southcrest team “is mainly doing the sheetrock and the OSB board in the garage and in the storage room.”

"We didn't really tell everybody in the world, but we were running out of money and ... couldn't afford to buy any materials anymore," he said.

"With everything that's happened, we don't need to be reminded there's a God. ... But if you're sitting there wondering, you know, because everyone has these kinds of thoughts, if you just want to give up, or you say, 'I'm tired of feeling this way,' God always just comes back and says, 'Here I am again.'"

Davis, project leader in Matador, said he felt compelled to step in because "there wasn't any insurance on the house or anything, and they had limited funds to try to get this back where Brooke could live into it."



Brad Barnes, a member of Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock, works on a Texans on Mission rebuilding project in Matador. (Texans on Mission Photo / Russ Dilday)

"I was glad to be a part of it, since I live here anyway," he said.

Davis said the teams have "come in here and done things that there's no way this family could have gotten done without them, and they think they've had the blessing out of this.

"We told them: 'You may have, but we're the ones that really get the blessing—the team members that do the work.'"

Southcrest team lead Gary Beaty, associate pastor of missions for the congregation, agreed.

"We're trying to finish this project up, so Brooke can get a little bit of comfort and peace and get back to some semblance of normalcy," he said.

"I'm not sure what her options would have been, but she'd definitely have been looking for another place to live, and I'm not sure what would have been available here for her.

"I think that without God being behind it, we wouldn't be where we are right now, both with the people coming in and the work that's been done on the house. Without God's intervention and direction, this thing would never have taken off."