

GOOD MORNING,



KUBENA FAMILY!

By Rae Ann Spitzenberger

On the Set of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*

“GOOD MORNING, Kubena family!”

Those words, exclaimed by Ty Pennington of ABC TV Network’s *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, caused a community to spring into action and changed a family for a lifetime.

On an otherwise normal weekday, the *Extreme Makeover* TV crew rolled into my tiny hometown of East Bernard, Texas and caused the biggest buzz the town’s 2,500 residents have ever heard.

Everyone in town knows the Kubenas and their moving story. Twins Tara and Sara, now age seven, were diagnosed with leukemia at the age of two — surprising doctors by having the same non-genetic disease. Both girls were thought to be in remission when



Tara was diagnosed for the second time in May 2005. After a bone marrow transplant, she was unable to return to the family’s two-bedroom trailer because of special air quality needs.

Enter *Extreme Makeover*.

Once word got out, all volunteer slots filled up immediately. I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to help and witness firsthand the outpouring of love coming from miles around.

Even the demolition phase of this extreme makeover turned into a blessing for another family. The twins’ Uncle Jerry recently had a heart transplant, and his daughter, Missy, and her husband moved in with Jerry more than five years ago so Missy could care for him. Their four-year-old daughter



Photo by Raymond Alderete

Rae Ann Spitzzenberger (center) serves refreshments as she shares the excitement at the construction site of the Kubenas new home.

has never had her own room or her own bed. That all changed when Ty arrived to tell the family they were the proud new owners of the Kubenas' trailer.

The mood on site was certainly festive with events like Ty playing the accordion with Grandpa Kubena, who lives next door, and a group of elementary teachers bringing homemade food for the crew. But for the most part, it felt like being on any busy construction site (except for the large group of spectators and a camera crew wandering by every now and then).

Psalm 127:1a says, *Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.*

The more than 1,000 volunteers did not labor in vain those 106 hours, because God's love was evident throughout the building site and beyond.

A Christian radio station in Houston broadcast live from the site, encouraging people to volunteer, donate money, and — most of all — to pray. The twins' Aunt Laura (who nominated the family for the show) was given a "Prayer Beeper," which beeped each time someone prayed for the family. Not only did the Kubenas gain a beautiful new home, but they also gained countless new prayer supporters!

Now that's "love thy neighbor" to the extreme.

Editor's note: Check out the Extreme Make-over! Bible Study on page 29.



Rae Ann Spitzzenberger currently serves as the LWML Media & Marketing Committee Chairman. She works as a journalist in Beaumont, Texas, and will pursue graduate study in design this fall. In addition to her stint with Extreme Makeover, Rae Ann has honed her construction skills during four mission trips to Mexico.