



ROBERT K. YOSAY | THE VINDICATOR

Kathleen Price recently returned from Moore, Okla., which was devastated by a tornado May 20. She and Luana Rubin, a quilt fabric seller of Boulder, Colo., delivered aid and 400 handmade "comfort quilts" made by people in the Mission of Love network from the United States, Switzerland and England.

Mission of Love to build home

By WILLIAM K. ALCORN
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AUSTINTOWN

Kathleen Price, whose Mission of Love Foundation helps people and communities recover from hurricanes, tornadoes and other natural disasters, is like a force of nature herself.

The foundation and its network of friends put things back together one person, one family at a time, says Price of Austintown.

Residents of Moore, Okla., which was devastated by

a killer tornado May 20, are the latest Mission of Love beneficiaries.

Price recently returned from Moore where she and Luana Rubin of Boulder, Colo., distributed 400 handmade comfort quilts, made by people in the Mission of Love network from all over the United States and other nations, to first-responders, mothers, teachers and children who lost their homes.

Former Youngstown resident, Paula (Demechko) Langston, who lived on

Taft Avenue on Youngstown's South Side and moved to Oklahoma in 1980, received one of the quilts.

In a card thanking Price, Langston said: "I lost my house in the tornado and was honored to pick out a beautiful quilt for my family. We will cherish it forever, knowing the time and love someone put into making it. I was touched that you're based in Youngstown."

Price said she met with

the teacher who had her 23 students under desks, holding hands, singing and praying while the tornado passed. These and other children survived because of teachers who gave of themselves unconditionally, she said.

"It was one of the most humbling and emotional days of my life," said Price, whose Mission of Love has, over the years, distributed more than 10,000 handmade comfort quilts around the world to people devastated by tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, war and tsunamis.

Price teams up with Rubin, who owns a business, eQuilter, that sells fabric to quilters around the world who then make quilts to be distributed to disaster victims.

The focus of the Moore mission was to make sure that people who lost a child and a home, and first-responders, received a comfort quilt.

"I rented a truck and took the quilts — 1,200 miles each way — to Moore. I'd do it again in a heartbeat. Most of the recipients had lost everything," Price said. "When they saw the quilts, many just wept. Children got big smiles and hugged and hugged the quilts. What I saw, the comfort that was given, money can't buy that."

Mission of Love now plans to build as many homes as the foundation can for people who lost not just their homes, but a child to the EF5 tornado. She will need plenty of donated materials and volunteers, however.

With peak winds estimated at 210 mph and a width of 1.3 miles at one point, the tornado stayed on the ground for 39 minutes and 17 miles.

Danni Legg, a Chock-taw American Indian and special-education teacher, was one of the people who came for a comfort blanket.

MISSION OF LOVE

How to donate

The Mission of Love Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated in Ohio 25 years ago, is seeking donations of money to purchase building supplies to build homes in Moore, Okla.

People who have building materials to donate can email Kathleen Price at kathy@missionoflove.org.

To donate money, visit www.missionoflove.org and click on "Love Donation."

Legg, who has been living in a shelter, not only lost her home and all of her possessions to the tornado, her 9-year-old son, Christopher, was killed while trying to protect two classmates. A wall collapsed and broke his back, Price said.

Christopher had battled melanoma cancer for four years and had been given a clean bill of health just two weeks before the tornado hit, Price added.

After hearing Legg's story, Price and Rubin decided that Legg would be the first person for whom Mission of Love plans to build a home.

The Mission of Love, which also has organized numerous humanitarian and medical missions, is no stranger to "putting out the word" for building materials and volunteers to put up structures.

The nonprofit organization has built homes and other buildings, including a Lakota Language School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, home to the Oglala Sioux; homes in the wake of Hurricane Katrina; and a children's hospice facility in Guatemala.

"We get no grants or government money. It's all grass roots ... all volunteer. I put out the word via the Mission of Love network of friends, and it happens," said Price, who also is a volunteer.