



Profiles in Courage: Karen Montez



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Kim Williams shares the story of her sister Karen Montez:

“Karen was the mother of 3 children and at the young age of 37 was diagnosed with ALS. A few years earlier, while working in Austin as a dental assistant, Karen began to have problems with her muscles that interfered with her ability to perform her job. She decided to quit her job to see if the infirmity would go away. Rather than getting better, she continued to get worse and then we received the shocking diagnosis that forever changed our family. She was married at the time and was staying at home in Georgetown with her two teenagers and 5-year-old. Over the course of the next few years her condition worsened until she could no longer perform the daily duties of a mother and a wife. Around this time, her husband, who was also the family’s primary caregiver, abandoned the situation.

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Her only source of income, limited disability from Social Security, did not provide her with enough means to install the equipment that would have made her daily life more functional. Without it, the routine things we all take for granted, such as walking, dressing, and bathing were becoming increasingly difficult and dangerous to perform. Karen was a strong-willed, independent woman and fought the disease with everything she had. However, as her health declined she became very fearful of falling, and that one of us would drop her while moving her. She pushed herself as hard as she could every day to stay mobile, but sadly the day came when a wheelchair was the only option. She would sit in the kitchen and look at the backyard through the sliding glass doors, knowing that she could no longer go outside.

Around this time, we met Don Busby, who had a son named Bo who also had ALS. Don mentioned that a local foundation had been created to not only help his son, but also others in the Central Texas area who suffered with this disease. Once they learned of Karen's needs, volunteers from the Busby Foundation went to her home and installed a ramp at the front door and at the sliding glass back door. They remodeled the master bath, enlarging the shower stall so that she could take a private shower in her wheelchair. They also installed handrails for her to use in the restroom.



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During the construction, the hot water heater went out. For about a week the family went without hot water as she could not afford to have it fixed or replaced. As soon as the Busby Foundation realized this, they quickly called a plumber and had a new hot water heater installed. There were so many nice things they did for her that I am sure I am leaving out some.

As all this was happening around the holiday season, the volunteers from the Foundation went to HEB and bought her a huge supply of groceries and household items to get her through Thanksgiving and Christmas.

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Karen was so thankful for all the help; and for someone who loved her independence fiercely, the newly installed handrails were a real blessing. She could once again feel as though she was helping care for herself. Until the time of her death in April, Karen was able to stay in her home, which was a great desire of her heart. The Busby foundation helped in a huge way to make that possible. Words cannot convey the tremendous impact the Busby foundation made in her life. They were an answer to her prayers.”

Helping central Texans like Karen Montez face ALS with dignity and strength is the focus of our work at the Busby Foundation. To learn more about how you can help please visit our website at www.busbyals.org. -- Volney Campbell, President of the Busby Foundation