

By EARL WATT - Daily Leader

Lucy Cazares was doing her job the same way she had for the past nine years in the cafeteria at Southwest Medical Center when she was told she was needed in the emergency room.

When she arrived she found her daughter and great-grandchild struggling for life after Lucy's home was engulfed in flames.

Wearing her cafeteria uniform, Lucy jumped on a helicopter to ride with her great-grandson to Wichita for emergency treatment. A member of the hospital staff reached in her pocket and gave Lucy all the money she had so that Lucy wouldn't be broke in Wichita.

Lucy stayed at the hospital, showering in the room and going to a local store to get a change of clothes.

Her great-grandson survived and so did her daughter that was life-flighted a couple of days later.

With her family secure, it was time to assess the damage at her apartment.

Other than some documents, it was a complete loss.



All the furnishings, the sheets, the dishes, the towels, the family pictures and the kids toys — gone.

Lucy did not have renter's insurance. Other than her job and her three great grandchildren, she had nothing.

For a while, Lucy stayed with one of her daughters, Yvette, and recently found a home she could afford to rent.

She continued to raise her great grandchildren. She has custody of all three. Adam Martinez, 4, is the oldest. Aaron is 19 months old, and Arial is 8 months old.

"It's rough," she said. "But I love them."

The Southwest Medical Center staff pitched in to provide Lucy some of the necessities — diapers for the kids, clothing and other basic necessities.

Other donations started to come — a couch, a chair, some dishes and sheets, even a bed or two.

Lucy has only been back to the fire once, to get birth certificates that survived the fire. Lucy wasn't comfortable talking about what had been lost. She wrung her hands as she explained the difficulty of seeing her life's belongings being destroyed. "I just haven't had a chance to go back," she said. "Everything was thrown away. It's been bad."

Staff members of Southwest medical Center helped Lucy move to her new home Tuesday night with the contents coming from donations from hospital staff and from the community.

“I am so grateful to everyone,” Lucy said.

While Lucy has some of the basic items she needs to survive, there are a few items that would be helpful. Lucy’s new home still does not have curtains, no kitchen table chairs, and the bathroom is still without a shower curtain. Diapers are an ongoing concern.

Despite the tidal wave of need, Lucy had no self pity. Instead, she did what she has always done — Lucy works every day and then picks up her great grandchildren and goes home. Albeit it sparsely furnished, Lucy is grateful to have a place to call home.

EDITOR’S NOTE — For those who would like to help Lucy, an account has been established at Community Bank. Other items of need would be food, diapers, kitchen chairs, curtains, bathroom items and more. Nancy Kletecka and Liz Taylor are coordinating donations, and they can be reached at 629-6437 or 629-6335.