

A Miracle for Miranda

We all make a wish sometime in our life and those wishes can come in all sizes. Shelley Effert's wish is for a miracle that would save the life of her four-year-old daughter, Miranda.

Born February 20, 2002, with Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome, meaning she was born with only half of a functional heart, Derek and Shelley Effert's daughter has fought a hard battle in a short period of time. Miranda had two open-heart surgeries before she the age of 2. She's also had eight heart catheter procedures, the last of which caused serious damage to an essential artery. Miranda's future remains highly uncertain. In 2004, while undergoing the fifth heart catheter, doctors also found that Miranda's left lung had stopped developing due to lack of blood flow. With this devastating discovery, Miranda could no longer be a candidate for a heart donation.

"We take each day one step at a time because we know that Miranda is going to leave us, we just never know when that's going to be," Effert says through tears.

Though financially times are very hard due to mounting medical bills, this year the family was fortunate enough to receive a \$3,000 grant from the Family Support Program of Waukesha County. Immediately Shelley and Derek decided the best way to utilize the money was to build a special therapy room for Miranda in the basement of their home.

When she began searching for contractors to take on the project, Shelley soon found herself frustrated by the lack of response. "I opened the phone book and just started calling people and so many said no as soon as they heard that we only had \$3,000 to work with," she says. But, after contacting the local chapter of The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI), Shelley got a bite. Thirty minutes later, she received a call from Mark Brick, president of B&E General Contractors, Inc. in Glendale.

"Mark was willing to take a look at what we had to work with and out of all the people we called, only Mark and one other contractor showed up to see what they could do," she says. The first contractor decided the job couldn't be done for such little funds, but when Brick took a look at the basement in early March, he was ready to tackle the job. "He just did some measuring, looked around and said he wanted to get started right away. I was shocked," Evert laughs. "Then as he was leaving, I asked him how much he thought we could do it for and he just said, 'don't worry about it, it'll all be donated.' I just immediately started crying and hugged him right there."

With Brick's generous donation, the family was able to use the \$3,000 toward much needed therapy equipment to stock Miranda's room. The equipment includes a special swing, a mini-trampoline, a therapy ball and a mini-table and chairs for Miranda and her teachers.

"When I heard the family's story I was just so touched, I knew I had to do something," says Mark Brick.

Brick not only donated his time and skills to the project, he also convinced others to lend a hand as well. Milwaukee Millwork of Milwaukee, Midwest Plumbing of Waukesha, Precision Wiring of Waukesha, Kerns Carpet One in Milwaukee, Preferred Drywall of Menomonee Falls, Stock Building Supply in Sussex, Badger



Miranda Effert enjoys her new playroom with her mom and brother.

Wholesale Electricians of Brookfield and Central Acoustical Supply House in Milwaukee also donated time and/or materials to the project.

As she looked at the completed room for the first time, Effert says she knew right then the family had witnessed a kind of generosity she had never seen before. "I just stopped and said, 'we've just experienced a miracle today.'"

Though the miracle of Brick and many others' generosity has truly moved the Effert family, there's still one miracle they hold onto, and that's seeing Miranda grow into a healthy child.

"When you start a family and have a plan, you sometimes find things don't always go according to that plan, but I really wouldn't change any of it," says Effert. "God gave Miranda to us because he knew that we would take care of her together and that's what we'll continue to do." ❧