



Billy W. Hobbs/The Union-Recorder

Kisha Coffee and her daughters, Kiersten and Kishaya, are joined by Habitat volunteers and supporters on Oct. 30 at their new home on Leo Court.

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Coffee family enjoying new Habitat for Humanity home

Kisha Coffee, who has taught school in the Baldwin County School District, is grateful to so many people for helping her to become a first-time homeowner.

She and her two daughters and newborn granddaughter are now living in their new home on Leo Court thanks to the Habitat for Humanity of Milledgeville-Baldwin County.

"It's like a dream come true," said Coffee, shortly after using a giant pair of scissors to cut the blue ribbon commemorating the special occasion on Oct. 30. "I'm so very grateful."

Coffee, who works at the Early Learning Center, has been a teacher for nearly 26 years.

Her two daughters, Kishaya and

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Kiersten, 16, who is a sophomore at Baldwin High School, joined their mother. Kishaya is a new mom and a recent graduate of Georgia Military College. Her 2-month-old daughter, Nova, and Coffee's mother, Betty Williams, also attended the event.

Before finally getting into their new home, the Coffee family lived in an apartment.

"It's just amazing to be living in our own home where we have so much more space," Coffee said. "It feels wonderful."

The new family home consists of three bedrooms and two full baths.

Sept. 1 marked the family's first night in their new home.

Ivey Hall, who is heads the Macon-Bibb and Milledgeville-Baldwin County Habitat for Humanity programs, was the keynote speaker at the event, which was held on the front lawn of the Coffee family's new home.

"In 2019, about this same time of year, many of you who are here today gathered just across the street to dedicate a Habitat home," Ivey said. "And little did we know at that point that in just a few months, the world would change with a global pandemic. The pandemic hit our Habitat here in Milledgeville really hard and paused our work for many years. But today, we celebrate the revival of Habitat in Milledgeville-Baldwin County with the dedication of a new home for the Coffee family."

She said the 20th such Habitat for Humanity home to be built in Milledgeville-Baldwin County since the program began 30 years ago was the vision of several local board members who strongly believed in the program.

"With the financial support of a CHIP grant through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs HOME Investment Program, the dream of the Coffee family is now a reality," Ivey said, noting this is the first of four new Habitat for Humanity homes slated to be built in Milledgeville and Baldwin County. "Two more are already underway and should be completed in the next couple of months."

A fourth new home will begin shortly after those two homes are completed.

"And that will complete the funding from the DCA grant," Ivey said.

She said after state funding was secured, the community stepped up in a big way.

Volunteers showed up from Georgia College & State University and State Farm Insurance, Public Charities,

Exchange Bank, Georgia Power Company and family and friends of the Coffee family. They all rolled up their sleeves and helped in building the newest Habitat home in Milledgeville, she added.

"We quickly realized that the mission of Habitat was never lost in Milledgeville, and we're so grateful to be a big part of the community again," Ivey said.

She said the Coffee family closed on their new home a couple of months ago and they moved in in early September.

"This week provided the perfect opportunity for us to celebrate their home's dedication," Ivey told more than 40 people who attended the event.

In Austin, Texas last week, hundreds of volunteers gathered for the Habitat for Humanity Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project Rural Rally to build 25 new homes.

"This is the first Carter work project since the passing of both the president and Mrs. Carter, but from the pictures and the stories we've heard, their spirit and commitment to affordable housing is alive and well in Texas," Ivey said. "For the first time Habitats from 75 communities and 31 states are joining the Carter Work Project Rural Rally, and we are thrilled to be able to participate with the dedication of our 20th Habitat home here in Milledgeville and Baldwin County and marks the return at Habitat's and our mission to the Milledgeville community in a big way."

Several people involved in the build took part in prayer during the dedication ceremony.

Paul Higgins, general manager of the Publix Supermarket at Lake Oconee in Greene County, was the first such speaker.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain," Higgins said in prayer. "Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain."

Higgins congratulated Coffee and her family on becoming new homeowners.

"I'm happy to be here on behalf of the Publix Charities," Higgins said. "Publix has partnered with Habitat for Humanity for the last 30 years to build strong homeownership in communities."

In 2024, Publix Charities donated \$11 million throughout eight states to help families achieve their goal of homeownership.

"We're proud to see this donation come to life today and this celebration," Higgins said. "I'd like to thank the staff the board and volunteers for Habitat Milledgeville-Baldwin

County and your leadership in giving families a hand in their quest for homeownership."

Higgins also thanked several employee volunteers from Publix who came out to help build this new home.

"I have a few blood stains on the walls," Higgins said with a smile. "But it's very rewarding to see the house come to life."

Higgins told Coffee and her two daughters and her new grandchild that he hopes each of them enjoy their new home for many years to come.

"May you and your family wake up every day in your new home filled with love, hope and a brighter future," Higgins said.

He then presented the family with a donation in the amount of \$900 from Publix.

Ivey then led the next prayer.

"Dear friends, we have gathered together to ask God's blessing upon this home, which by the favor of God and human labor have been made ready for this family," Ivey said. "This home is not simply a dwelling, but a symbol of God's love manifested through the efforts of many and offered in the hope that it will be a place of safety, growth, grace and love."

Dr. John Sallstrom, one of the founding members of the Milledgeville Habitat that started 30 years ago, also prayed.

"...Our good Lord, we give you thanks for the blessing of this day and ask for your presence among us as we gather to bless this family as they make this house into a home," Sallstrom said. "May the home we dedicate today become a beacon of hope for this family and others and may it be a sign for us all of what is possible through hard work, cooperation and your abiding spirit. It is in Christ's name that we gather and Christ's name we pray, amen."

Walter Reynolds, who represents District 4 on the Milledgeville City Council, followed with another prayer.

Northridge Christian Church pastor Rodney Fletcher later presented Coffee with a new family Bible.

Baldwin County Manager Carlos Tobur later presented Coffee with ceremonial keys to her new home.

Several gifts were also presented to the family.

"I just want to thank everybody for their hard work," Coffee told the crowd. "Nothing has gone unnoticed. We appreciate so, so very much. And blessings to you all."