

The BUILDers Book

Kebele's Chapter

Have you ever wondered where some of our partner families come from and what brought them to Habitat?

Kebele is from Ethiopia. She immigrated to the US in 2011. She won the lottery in Ethiopia, literally! It was a lottery ticket to be eligible to move to the United States. The US runs this lottery and residents can buy tickets on the street for .50 cents (US). She didn't expect to win, so she bought only one ticket. The list of winning names is hung up at the post office, which is where she found out she was one of the "lucky ones." As a lucky one, Kebele now had the enormous task of raising the \$2,500 processing fee and securing a sponsor in America.

Kebele won the lottery in Ethiopia! It was a lottery ticket to move to the US.



Kebele (center) with her children (L to R) Dawit, Wubinesh, Sena, Samson and Besa

Kebele earned \$50 (US) a month as a teacher in Ethiopia. She and her husband, Usha, raised their six kids in a four room house in the town of Arsi Negele. The kitchen and bathroom were outside. Kebele and Usha were both teachers. Usha also served as a principal during his

tenure. They specialized in math and science, and Usha taught language as well. He taught at a Catholic school, which is where they met.

Kebele's sponsor lived in Sioux Falls, so that's where she landed. It's "felt like home" ever since, she said. The sponsor is related to Usha's side of the family. They didn't have the finances to relocate the entire family, so Kebele started processing for her kids to join her, the minute she arrived. Samson came first because of an emergency medical situation! It was discovered that he had a tennis ball size tumor at the base of his brain. And the Ethiopian medical facilities were inadequate. At 14 years old, he couldn't walk or move his neck. He vomited when he ate, and the pain was excruciating.

Fourteen – year – old Samson had a tennis ball size tumor at the base of his brain.

Kebele worked with a US Senator's office to expedite his paperwork and it was approved in an unprecedented four weeks. Young Samson flew in to the Sioux Falls Regional Airport on a Friday evening, consulted with Avera oncologists on Monday and Tuesday, and underwent a six-hour



Kebele & Samson volunteering with Voyage Federal Credit Union

surgery on January 22, 2014. Painful chemotherapy and radiation followed the surgery. Today, Samson is healthy and thriving. He graduated from high school in June 2017 and just moved to Madison to study computer science at Dakota State University. He's interested in cyber security.

One year after Samson's arrival, Kebele applied for a Habitat house. She'd worked at John Morrell since immigrating in 2011 and had lived in the same small apartment. Now, she's gotten a job cleaning commercial properties, after six years

of packing pork products. Usha is stocking the frozen section at Walmart, while he looks for another job.

When Kebele boarded the plane for the United States, that had left Usha to raise their children as a single dad. It was challenging for Usha to watch his children leave, one – by – one and two – by – two, and resettle in America. “God had a plan to put you (Habitat) there to help us (my family),” Usha said. Usha was the last to arrive in America, one month prior to the home dedication.

We dedicated Kebele, Usha, Samson, Sena, Wubinesh, Besa and Dawit’s home on January 26, 2017. The house has 9 rooms and the kitchen and bathrooms are indoors. Kebele and her older children worked over 200 sweat equity hours to build it and take education classes. This was in addition to working full and part – time jobs and going to school.



*The family “together again”
at the Habitat home dedication*

When asked what they like about Sioux Falls, every family member talked about how “quiet” and “peaceful” it is here. How it’s easier to live in “good conditions” and not worry as much. How one of the daughters “never wants to live in another state!”

The extent of civil and military unrest in Ethiopia is hard to explain. The family shared a story about a jail that had been set on fire by the military. Everyone inside died, as a result of the fire, the government said. In actuality, everyone had been shot, prior to the blaze. And you can be jailed for expressing derogatory comments about the government to a friend.

On June 15, 2017, Kebele became a citizen of the United States! The application process took about a year and cost \$685. The emotional ceremony was hosted at Mt Rushmore National Memorial.

She is beyond proud to say she is an American citizen, with a mortgage, and six healthy, settled kids!

Kebele became a US citizen on June 15, 2017! The ceremony was at Mt. Rushmore.

Be a BUILDer alongside Kebele and her family! You have the special opportunity to help other families “win the lottery.”

With your financial donation, Habitat purchases the lot and buys the supplies to build the home with and for the family. The families “pay it forward” with their monthly mortgage payments.

Thank you for your support!

We can't fulfill our mission of:

- 1) Building strength, stability and self – reliance
- 2) Through shelter
- 3) With hard working, deserving families...
...without the help of your hard working family.

Write the next chapter of
The BUILDers Book with us!