

Photo: Chuan D. Vo



## Mother's Strength Holds Family Together

by Silvana Tabares

Marylupe Chavez is a mother who puts her family first and makes every effort to be a good role model for her two sons, Eduardo, 11 and Ernesto, 8. When an unexpected turn changed her life, it gave her the courage and hope to move her family forward.

In 2001, her husband Tomas Chavez – who she has been married to for the past 11 years – was involved in an accident when visiting his family in Puerto Vallarta, México. He fell off a rock and dove head first into the shallow water. The impact pinched the nerves in his spinal cord causing him to become a quadriplegic. Her husband is now confined to a wheelchair.

But Chavez remains optimistic. She does not see this as the end nor does she expect her husband to stay this way permanently.

“The whole family has hope that somehow stem cell research will be able to bring him back some independence,” she said.

But Chavez says her faith in God also makes her stronger.

“Hoping and praying to [God] give us strength just to continue and go on further, that is mainly the biggest reason why we are still moving forward because we believe,” Chavez said. “Our biggest support has been going to church. Listening to other families deal with their situation. It doesn't even have to be the exact situation that we are living but we see that we are very lucky.”

Chavez said shortly after the accident, adjusting to a different lifestyle was not easy. She took on more responsibilities. At the time, she did not know how to drive, and caring for her husband while raising her two sons, with the eldest beginning school, was hard to deal with emotionally and physically.

“I decided to learn [to drive] and take that step forward. I got my license last year,” Chavez said.

Now she is able to drive to work, go grocery shopping and take her sons to their sporting games and practices. Having an active life with her family is important to Chavez. Since the accident she has been working only part-time.

“I decreased my hours to be more with my family, to be more with the boys and more involved in their lives and to take care of my husband,” she said. “I always try to stretch my time and make time for them.”

Chavez said her mother, who is one of her main supporters, has influenced and shaped her as the mom who she is today. When Chavez was young, her father was in a work accident that left him incapable to work.

“Seeing her struggle and seeing how she also moved us forward has definitely inspired me to move my family forward,” Chavez said.

She said her mother taught her to be a strong, positive and loving mother and more than anything, to never give up.

Chavez said she strives to be positive with her sons even if it is a hard day. She says her family is full of positive energy and that in any given situation, they communicate with each other, work things out and give emotional support.

Being a mother is hard but very rewarding, Chavez said.

“It is a job but it is not your typical job where you get paid. Your payment is your kids being happy,” she said. “There are so many obstacles that even though you could be a really good mom, you could step out and something could happen. You always just pray that your kids know the difference between right and wrong and if they don't know to always ask for help.”

This Mother's Day, Chavez plans to spend it at home with her family.

“As long as we're together, that's all that matter. I don't need a big gift. That's my gift – that we're not separated that day.” ■

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**The Chavez family** — Marylupe, her husband Tomas and her two kids Eduardo and Ernesto have faced difficult times over the last six years, but through it all, Marylupe has used her faith and motherly love to keep her family together.