

Joplin Pays It Forward

The Miracle of the Human Spirit

Community Leaders Share Our Recovery Lessons

Compiled and Edited by Jane Cage

Foreword by Richard Serino, FEMA Deputy Director

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Contacting the contributors:

We hope that you may want to contact a contributor for additional information or to use as a resource. Rather than publish contact information directly in this book, we have setup a contact page at <http://www.joplinmo.org/joplinpaysitforward> where you can submit a contact request to any of them.

Cover Photo: The stainless steel ring on the cover is a replica of the wrist bands given out by the City of Joplin to the thousands of volunteers that came to help us remove debris and rebuild our city. Through the ring is the clean-up of St. John's Hospital that was destroyed in the tornado.

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Foreword

I am honored to contribute to this remarkable collection of stories; stories that embody the resilience, courage, and selflessness of the people of Joplin, Missouri. On May 22, 2011, while many Joplin residents were still celebrating the graduation of their high school seniors and welcoming the beginning of summer, an EF-5 tornado tore through the city and surrounding counties, leaving an eight mile long and 3/4 mile wide path of immense destruction. The Joplin tornado was one of the deadliest in U.S. history, claiming the lives of 161 people.

The collection of stories in *Joplin Pays It Forward* provides us insight into Joplin's incredible journey to rebuild in the wake of mass devastation. Among its many inspiring lessons, the stories tell us how Joplin was able to live up to its promise to re-open completely destroyed schools by the start of the school year; how Joplin worked with a state university to provide shelter, a surge medical clinic, and a volunteer coordination point; and how Joplin was able to coordinate the thousands of volunteers that flooded in to provide support. The authors of these chapters represent every facet of the community— from state and local officials, to volunteers, to the private sector. Because this book is so crosscutting, providing diverse perspectives and aspects of Joplin's recovery, there is a lesson for everyone. Whether a novice volunteer or a veteran emergency manager, we can all learn from Joplin's experience.

I arrived in Joplin less than 15 hours after the tornado struck. I was immediately inspired by the quick action and selflessness from the first responders and residents. I saw first-hand the remarkable leadership displayed by formal and informal leaders— I saw the hope they provided to the people of Joplin and to people all around this country. The individual stories highlighted in this book demonstrate that in order to be resilient, we must work with the whole community. The whole community includes private businesses, faith based communities, non-profit organizations, volunteers, citizens, and formal and informal community leaders. *Joplins Pay It Forward* provides us with insight into how the city successfully built resilience into the fabric of their community, and as a result, has undergone an incredible recovery.

I have had the privilege to return to Joplin several times since that fateful day in 2011. Each time, I am more and more inspired by the Joplin community. Meeting the people of Joplin and watching how they have come together in the aftermath of this tragedy has been one of the highlights of my career. I would like to thank the Joplin community for providing us with the lessons they learned from their experience so that together, we can build a more resilient nation. Thank you for paying it forward!

Rich Serino

Deputy Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency

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Introduction

Who would have ever thought that Joplin would be where we are today – on the other side of what we all refer to as the “devastating tornado” of May 22, 2011? As a community, we were called on to respond, and more importantly to recover. From the first day, some of us have been in the national spotlight while others of us have worked behind the scenes. Many of us had roles defined by our jobs while some of us have stepped into leadership positions for the very first time. We have all learned lessons that can make the path easier for the next community touched by a disaster. We can also help the myriad of agencies that came to help us understand how to help the next community even more.

Some of us have been interviewed many times. Some of us have not had the opportunity to speak with anyone about our experiences. Joplin has been a living laboratory for academicians and scientists who came with their own questions and agendas. This is our opportunity to ensure that “our” story is shared in a way that can inform and support the leaders of disasters that may happen in the future. While each of us has played a leading role in the recovery and resiliency of Joplin, we believe that there is not one of us that is responsible. As we have reflected and listened to one another, the word “we” has emerged as a common theme. Building upon the essence of “we,” it is time that the Joplin story is captured from the perspective of not one but a well-rounded approach that demonstrates the interwoven fabric that characterizes our recovery.

After the shock of the first few weeks wore off and the initial disaster response was in place, we discovered that the hard work really began. The following pages are filled with our “aha” moments and our frustrations. We recount what was helpful and what blocked our path. We talk about our victories and some of our tougher moments. Only a few of us are professional writers so please bear that in mind as you read our first-hand accounts. Our stories are the definition of our resilience and also our hope.

Joplin has been singled out as an example to the nation. We all have experiences that none of us ever wished for but will allow us to make a difference. At the same time, we do understand that our experiences should not be construed as “best practices” but instead as a resource. In each of our stories there may be a concept, an admission or an idea that will help us “pay it forward” in recognition of the support that we received. Please read these stories in that spirit and know that we are ready to offer additional assistance as we are able.

On a personal note, I am grateful to every participant who contributed an essay. Your willingness to “Pay It Forward” exemplifies the spirit that will continue to propel us forward.

In the spirit of recovery,

Jane Cage

Chairman, Joplin Citizens Advisory Recovery Team

Setting the Stage

Joplin is a city of 50,000 residents in the corner of southwest Missouri. We serve a surrounding population eight times our size and during the work week are home to over 200,000 people each day. On Sunday evening, May 22, 2011 the third worst tornado recorded in the United States since 1948 passed through our city. The EF5 tornado left a path of devastation eight miles long and $\frac{3}{4}$ miles wide with winds recorded at over 200 miles per hour. Residents mobilized immediately after the storm passed to help fellow residents in need. They cleared streets almost before outside help could arrive. The immensity of the storm is reflected in the statistics below. No statistic is more significant however than the 161 Joplin residents that lost their lives as a result of the storm.

The task of debris removal and rebuilding could never be accomplished without the help that has poured in from around the world. As of April 2013, 176,869 volunteers have provided 1,146,083 hours of time to the rebuilding and recovery of Joplin. **Because of this one amazing statistic, we feel compelled to pay it forward.**

Lives Lost: 161

Injuries: Over 1,000

Structures Damaged: 7,500 (4,000 of those destroyed)

Residents Impacted: 17,000 (9,200 of those displaced)

Debris Removed: Over 3,000,000 cubic yards

City Buildings Lost: Two Fire Stations, Senior Citizens Center

Parks Damaged: Cunningham Park, Parr Hill Park, Garvin Park, Mohaska Park, Ewert Park

City Infrastructure: sidewalks, streets and curbs. Over 2,000 street signs and 59 manhole covers disappeared

Schools Totally Destroyed: Joplin High School, East Middle School, Franklin Technology Center, Irving Elementary School, Emerson Elementary School

Schools Damaged or Partially Destroyed: Cecil Floyd Elementary School, Duquesne Elementary School, Kelsey Norman Elementary School, Roi S. Wood Administration Building

Electric Utilities: 20,000 customers without service, 100 miles of line down, almost 3,900 poles and 1,500 transformers damaged, one substation destroyed and two damaged

Water Utilities: 4,000 leaking customer lines, 25 torn fire service lines, Service Center and Plant Storage Building destroyed

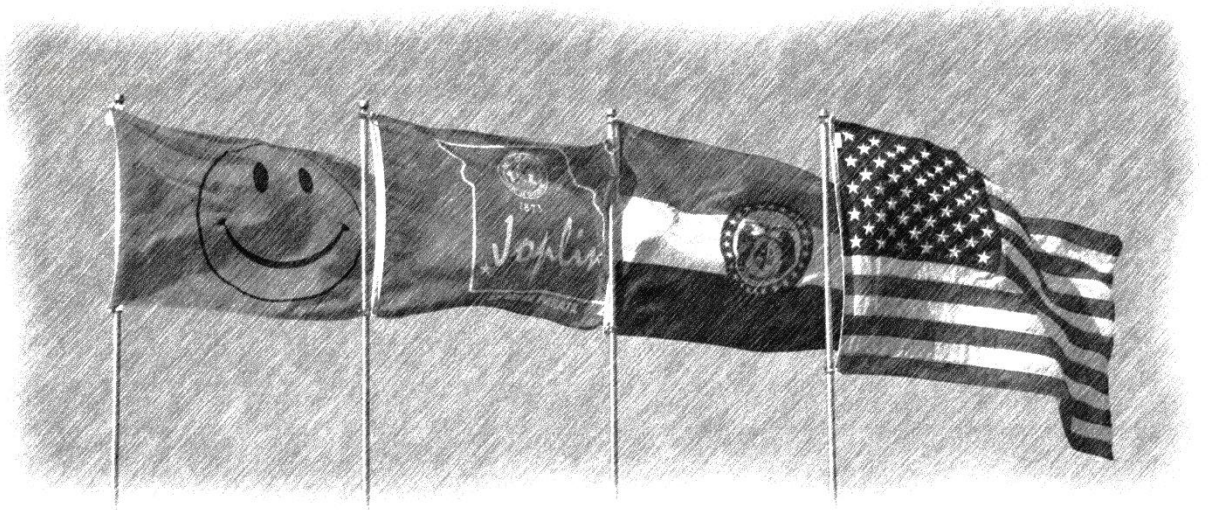
Insurance Loss: estimated at over \$2 billion

Business Losses: 531 destroyed or severely damaged, 4,500 employees affected

Healthcare Sector: St. John's Hospital destroyed, St. John's Physician Office Building destroyed, St. John's Brady Rehabilitation Building destroyed, Freeman Hospital West sustained roof and systems damage, Ozark Center Behavioral Health System lost one-half of its buildings

The epilogue located at the end of these essays updates you on where we are two years later..

City Government



Mark Rohr – City Manager

When this disaster hit Joplin, I was like most people who always had done preparation and planning for a disaster, but really never thought it would happen to me. In my some 25 years as a city manager, I had not imagined a tragedy such as the May 22 tornado to occur in a community I was serving. I have been in cities in which we dealt with storms and the damage incurred, but nothing remotely like this. It was overwhelming – I was overwhelmed for a brief moment, but I knew that we had to get to work immediately. I took a deep breath, told myself that if the City was going to recover, we needed to get to work - and that's what we did.

The work has involved everyone, and many have come together to get Joplin where it is today. All have played an important role in Joplin's recovery.

Looking back over the past two years, it is difficult to summarize all that we have learned, and how various situations were managed to provide a positive resolution, but a lot of the work was done pre-disaster. Cooperative agreements and collaborative work with our community partners in providing services and amenities for our citizens are important, and should be on the books, in case your city would face a disaster such as this.

Other elements of managing the recovery were part of a learning process for me and for many others. Because of this, and the prospect of helping other city officials and community leaders, I wrote a book, "The Miracle of the Human Spirit", to summarize the lessons learned. In it I listed the Ten Tenets of Disaster Management. Below is a review the premise of each one.

1. Get organized. This speaks for itself, but with countless issues pulling at you immediately it is imperative that you put together your team and make assignments as necessary. Keep in mind that each person will handle the stress differently. Some will disengage, while others will kick it up a notch or two.
2. Understand there will be trial and error. Don't be afraid to implement something if it makes sense, and in turn, to abandon something if it is not working. There is no "how to" book for every disaster.
3. Find a way for everyone to participate either by donating or volunteering. People want to help; they want to be part of the solution. Let them. In doing so, over one million volunteer hours have been provided in Joplin, and these are just the volunteers we were able to document. This was doubly rewarding, as FEMA reimburses a percentage of the value of donated goods, including volunteer hours, so it is very important to document their time.
4. Don't get seduced by the limelight – stay focused on what is important. There will be many things, events, people, etc. demanding your time. As the leader of the group, it is essential to separate key items that you need to tend to, and those that you can delegate.
5. Stay directly connected to the area and people impacted by the disaster. In your work, you will find that you stay in the office, going from meeting to meeting, and making decisions. Step away at times and get into the disaster area. It helps to see the progress, meet the people and discover how they are doing, and what concerns they may have that you and your team have not yet addressed. It is the human side and the side that keeps

you motivated and informed about what the people really need – working for your citizens, what better goal is there?

6. Designate one spokesperson to update progress and reassure the public regarding the future. By keeping the same spokesperson, in this case, it was me, it helps the audience relate to the city because they become accustomed to the person's tone and demeanor. As time passes, your presence becomes reassuring to your viewers and listeners who know that you are still in the fight with them.
7. Local leadership is the essential ingredient. There will be many that come to assist you, including FEMA and SEMA – both helpful organizations. But as time goes on, the people change. The organization is still there, but their representatives have changed, which can impact the process, depending on their scope of knowledge of the situation, as well as work ethic and personalities. It comes down to the local leadership. We are the ones setting the pace, and these agencies are working for us. And they do, but you have to provide the direction in where you want them to go. They will tell you that they can enhance local leadership, but they cannot take its place.
8. Be aware of the psychological mood of the community. There are different stages a community goes through following a disaster. Research has proven this, and we kept this in mind as we moved through the process of debris removal, demolition and rebuilding. As everyone tries to pull their lives together, it is important to give them a goal to strive for, and one to keep in mind as they face the hard work of cleaning up their property and rebuilding their lives. By announcing a community goal, people tend to rally behind this, giving them a sense of purpose to continue. Working collectively with their fellow neighbors also brings a kindred spirit to the cause, and a sense of teamwork. As the goal is accomplished, there is a sense of accomplishment and pride in coming together to improve your community.
9. Use the attention created by the event to benefit the community. Don't be overwhelmed or victimized by it. Prior to May 22, Joplin was known in the state and the region, but with over 300 news agencies covering the disaster, along with the many stories of hope and resilience of our citizens, our community was thrust onto center stage for a time. Numerous speaking requests poured in. Prioritization of these was important, because we still had work to do, but yet wanted to help those asking. We developed a strong speaker's bureau with accurate information and appropriate photos to help tell the story to serve as the foundation for some of our management staff to share with key organizations and groups. As the recovery efforts continued, I decided to go to several of these and tell my story. Let me say this – be prepared for the emotional backslide this can bring. Although painful and difficult to complete, I knew it was important to get the story out to key audiences. In doing so, we were able to express our needs. We did not go out seeking attention, but this aspect of others wanting you to come and tell your story exists, so we decided to utilize the opportunities in a constructive way. From this, as well as the many other collaborative efforts we had already been through, I am comfortable saying that we have made many strong alliances throughout this experience and am honored and humbled that they sought us out. We learned from them, just as they learned from us.
10. Limit the number of people given access to the actual operations center. This may seem too simple and not necessary to list as a key element of the rescue and recovery

operations – but when too many are involved, the atmosphere becomes somewhat chaotic, and the focus can get cloudy. The task is too important to allow this to happen, so unless the personnel are key to the operations and those working their stations, then they can phone it in.

In closing, our experience has been one of hard work and a commitment to the cause of making Joplin whole again. Disaster recovery is not a sprint, it is a marathon. It will be long and hard with hills to climb when you're tired. But remember there are many on the sidelines, cheering you on, keeping you going, and joining you as you envision the finish line. Just keep the pace.

Mike Woolston – Mayor 2011-2012

When a community suffers through a natural disaster as we did on May 22, 2011, everyone involved has a different perspective as to how the community reacts, where mistakes were made and what could have been done better. I believe those perspectives are based on the individual's own personal life experience, their position in the community (a newly hired city employee, a department head for the city, a council member, etc.) and a variety of other factors.

At the time of the tornado, I had served on council for approximately nine years and had just completed the first year of my two-year term as mayor. What follows is my perspective on how to be better prepared for a natural disaster:

1. Hire absolutely the best people you can afford! Every area of the country is prone to some kind of natural disaster – earthquakes on the West Coast, volcanoes in the Northwest, tornadoes here in the Midwest, hurricanes in the Southeast, floods on the East coast and blizzards anywhere in the North. No matter where you are, a natural disaster of major proportion can befall your community virtually anytime. That's why I feel that you must have the best possible employees you can get, particularly in certain key positions. And this applies not only to positions within the city such as the city manager. In our case, it applied to the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the school district superintendent and a couple of weeks later, to the volunteer that chaired the community committee that solicited citizen input on how we wanted to rebuild (CART). When natural disaster strikes, you don't have time to bring in consultants or other advisors, you have to act immediately and you must have people in place that have the capacity to do so.
2. It's not enough however, to merely hire the best people. When a crisis occurs, you have to step back and let them do their jobs. In our case (the city) once again, I felt that most of the decisions that needed to be made were operational decisions and were the purview of the city manager. City council did make some policy decisions as needed, but imagine the delay and confusion that would have occurred if the city council had to formally approve every decision made. If that were the case, we'd still be clearing the streets of fallen trees. (A process that we had completed in just a few days; though not completely cleared, the streets were at least navigable.) Our city manager and his staff rose to the occasion. All performed at a high level and some performed at the highest possible level. Though I am unable to cite concrete examples, I know this to be true by looking at how much we have accomplished in just two short years after the disaster.
3. The third item I'll offer is one that has been on my mind since shortly after the tornado occurred: Don't underestimate the response of your community. Had someone described to me the events of May 22, 2011 and the subsequent response by the community – I would never have believed them. To my pleasant surprise, within 48 hours after the tornado, I saw citizens that had already begun clearing the debris from their property. Within 96 hours after the tornado, I saw property owners that had already initiated the reconstruction of their property. After having received rave reviews and compliments from professional disaster recovery people at all levels, I've often wondered what prompted the community to respond as it did. Quite often we've been compared to Hurricane Katrina and more recently to Super Storm Sandy. I've asked myself why did our community respond in one way and other communities respond in a different way? Is it our heritage of being founded by independent hard rock miners or was it our more

rural upbringing (as opposed to big city) that makes us so independent? Whatever the reason, the response by our citizens of taking action to pull themselves out of a bad situation and not wait on the government to rescue them was the key. Don't get me wrong - in a disaster like ours, I don't believe any community can pull themselves out of a hole like that without help. The federal and state governments were both instrumental in providing assistance to Joplin. But it was the initial and ongoing response by our citizens that I believe helped set the tone for the advancements we have made in our continuing recovery. The 175,000+ volunteers that have come and are still coming to our community to help, have saved us financially due to the offset that FEMA allows for the volunteer hours of service. But it was the positive response by our citizens that keeps us on the road to recovery. Again, I believe it was the initial actions and tone set by formal and informal leaders in the community that got us started in the right direction but it was the volunteers and our citizen response that keeps us moving forward.

4. My final thought is about assistance available from the government, primarily FEMA. When FEMA arrived, they essentially told us that they could only perform as well as a community that needed their assistance would allow. They then asked us what they could do to help us. Even though that may sound very helpful, what we found and have since imparted to them was that instead of asking what we needed them to do, they should offer a menu of services that they can provide and then let the community decide which of those services the community wants to utilize. Under the current scenario, there may be a FEMA program that is a perfect fit for your community and your disaster. However, if you don't know to ask about it, you may never learn of its existence. If FEMA offered a menu of available services, communities could then decide on an overall plan of which services to implement. On the whole, our relationship with FEMA proved to be very fruitful for us. I felt we were able to have open and honest conversations with them and, given their input, were able to make better decisions about how to go forward. Hopefully, they found it to be a good experience as well. Our sense of the situation, after having worked closely together for an extended period, is that they are rewriting and improving their procedures manual based on what they learned here.

In summary, I'll be the first to tell you that no matter what the disaster, your community will *never* be fully prepared for what will come. The best you can hope for is to have key personnel in place that can think clearly when under tremendous pressure, that understand the long term impact of short term decisions, that can make decisions with confidence and that can revise their own decisions when it's clear that decisions previously made were not the right ones. I hope your community never suffers a disaster like ours, but if you do, I think you'll be well advised to learn from our experience. After all, the long term survival of your community could hang in the balance.

Sam Anselm - Assistant City Manager

Facing down the aftermath of an EF-5 tornado just seven weeks after beginning my employment with the City of Joplin wasn't on my list of projects to when I interviewed with the city manager, but throughout my career in public service, I've learned that someone in the role of assistant city manager needs to be flexible. Here are a few other things I've learned as a result of May 22, 2011.

FEMA

When working with FEMA, they have said time and again that they are only as good as the local leadership on the ground when they respond to a disaster, so don't be afraid to take charge. And don't take no for an answer, either; it's your city, and you'll be dealing with the results of any disaster long after they've left town. Also, when they come to town they don't necessarily give you a menu of options or services they offer, but instead you need to know how to ask the questions the right way. If you run into any roadblocks, call someone (like me) who has been through it; we received help from over 400 other public agencies, so we'd like to pay it forward if we can. It also helps to know someone on the inside who can help you know which questions to ask or how. Like any successful relationship, you have to build trust with FEMA officials so they in turn can trust you. If you say you're going to do something, do it. FEMA learned pretty quickly in Joplin that we do what we say, and by building that trust we were able to get more accomplished.

Volunteers

When working with volunteers get organized quickly and tap into the resources you have to help you get what you need. For example, the day after the tornado we had begun receiving complaints that it was taking too long to get volunteers into the disaster area to help clear debris, so the city manager asked me to go fix it. After figuring out where the Missouri Southern campus was, I arrived at the volunteer reception center and saw that many volunteers were lined up at two small passenger school buses parked in front of the volunteer reception area, with hundreds more waiting in the commons area outside of the student center. At the front of one of the buses was a guy with a clipboard taking down information. Without him knowing who I was, I asked him what he was doing, and he told me he was making sure we had everyone's contact information in order to keep track of who was going into the field (another important issue I'll address shortly). Because of heavy traffic and clogged roads, I knew that it was taking more than an hour to get them into the field, so I suggested they take down the info as they were driving to the area. That suggestion helped get people on the bus more quickly and feel like they were making progress.

Another bottleneck I soon discovered was a lack of buses, so I contacted our transportation coordinator at the city to see if he could get the phone number of the school district's transportation coordinator. The school district had canceled classes for the rest of the year, so I knew their buses and drivers would be available. Within a few hours we had 10 large Joplin school buses at the site helping transport volunteers. So my advice is to remember the old Sesame Street song, *Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?* and get to know the people in your city who know how to get stuff done. On the first Saturday after the tornado, we had over 3,300 registered volunteers providing assistance through the coordination of AmeriCorps-St. Louis. While AmeriCorps did a tremendous job for us, upon arrival they really needed someone to help identify local resources. Be that person. Then, step aside and let them do their job.

Disaster volunteers are already motivated, all they need is someone to point them in the right direction and tell them what to do. Then stand back and be amazed at what the combined efforts of dedicated volunteers can do. In 68 days, volunteers removed over 1.5 million cubic yards of debris. The federal contractor assigned by the Army Corps of Engineers barely matched that effort in the same amount of time.

This leads me to my final point about using volunteers. Please, please, please track who they are, what areas they work in, and for how long. When FEMA eventually bills you for the clean-up costs, donations and volunteer labor will count as a soft match against that bill. Again, in 68 days, we had over \$17.7 million dollars' worth of donations and volunteer labor that counted as a match against the local cost. What could have been a financial devastation to our community was lessened greatly by using and tracking volunteer time. If you don't take heed of anything else I've said here, pay attention to this. It could literally save your city from going bankrupt.

Staff

I cannot begin to say enough good things about how our staff responded to this disaster. Nearly everyone of them stepped up to the challenge. My advice would be to get to know the strengths and weaknesses of your staff, and put them in positions where they can be successful. This is true in everyday work life, but especially so in the event of a disaster. We had numerous employees who actually lost their homes or property, yet they came to work after making sure their families were okay to help serve our residents in need.

One suggestion I would have, though, is to keep a careful eye on those employees who were directly affected. Their first inclination will be to deflect help and instead try to help other people, but you need to remember that they need help too. A good heart-to-heart conversation goes a long way towards healing emotionally. If you aren't in a position to have that conversation for whatever reason, make sure someone else is talking to them. As public servants, I believe that most of us are people who like other people, HR staff especially. So make sure your HR folks know which staff members were directly impacted, and ask them to be a resource for other staff members who are facing this challenge. Having been through this a time or two, FEMA officials told us that 12 to 18 months after the disaster we would start seeing a high amount of employee turnover. Over two years later, while I cannot say for sure why, we haven't really seen that type of turnover in Joplin. Maybe it's because we took the time to address the needs of our own employees in addition to the needs of our citizens. But maybe it's something else...

After moving here in 2011 from the St. Louis area, it didn't take long to fall in love with this community and the people in it. After seeing what we've gone through and the way we've handled it, I can't imagine a better place where someone would want to raise a family. I suspect, and I hope, that if you ever have to go through what we've gone through, you'll discover the same love for your city that I have for mine. My job may or may not take me to other cities, but a large piece of my heart will always live here.

Lane Roberts - Chief of Police

The demands placed on law enforcement in responding to the catastrophic effects of the May 22, 2011 F5 tornado were unique. Although in my 40-year career I had been involved in numerous disasters, including the Mt. St. Helens volcanic eruption, nothing in my experience was similar to this. Some degree of warning existed prior to the disasters to which I had previously helped respond. The Joplin tornado provided mere minutes of warning and in a little more than 30 minutes, nearly one-third of my community had been destroyed. Certainly, I hope no other Police Chief is called upon to respond to a disaster of this magnitude, but disasters are part of life. When they happen, I hope that the lessons learned from our experience will be useful. This is what I would say to a Police Chief facing similar demands:

1. Don't surrender the mission. My Assistant Chief referred to this as "staying in your own swim lane." Our mission during the tornado response was to maintain the rule of law. We held a brief meeting the morning after the tornado and made a very deliberate decision to support search and rescue, not become search and rescue. We profited by the mistakes of other police agencies in disasters, most notably Hurricane Katrina. When law enforcement forsook its role to maintain the rule of law, and became primarily search and rescue, anarchy was the immediate result and it took a long time to recover from it. The law doesn't mean much unless someone enforces it and that is law enforcement's primary mission. A lot of people assumed that we would have rampant "looting" in the tornado footprint, but that never took root because the police were still maintaining law and order.
2. Don't re-victimize the victims with overly aggressive enforcement. Merely because a disaster has occurred does not relieve public safety of the obligation to treat people with dignity and respect. What little was left of those victims lives was wrapped up in that debris. It was our job to protect it until they had a chance to recover what they could. However, we could not determine by looking who were the good guys and who were the bad guys. Consequently, we had to be very proactive, but treating victims like potential suspects was not acceptable. We met daily with every agency and reiterated that the operating philosophy was "be assertive, but be nice."
3. Have a backup plan for staging. Our normal staging area was right in the tornado path and was destroyed. In the very early stages we had trouble tracking resources, both human and non-human, because we lacked an area to stage. We corrected this quickly, but we probably wasted some resources early on simply because we did not know we had them. Because we could not stage them, we did not have the ability to assign them according to our needs.
4. Be prepared for a massive, possibly overwhelming response for assistance. Staging was a critical piece here. Nearly 200 police departments came to our assistance. Some of them self-deployed. We had trouble accounting for them and using them effectively for the first 24 hours. It may seem bureaucratic but it is important to begin tracking those resources from the very beginning. It makes allocation and assignment much more efficient and will become very important later when it is necessary to account for them. Additionally, there will be cost recovery to address and it is difficult to recover what you can't prove was expended.
5. Every element in a response is important. The police and fire responses depended heavily on the ability of Public Works to clear streets so that we could get into the

affected areas to do our jobs. Volunteers were critical, but they had to be tracked and assigned. Community Development took on that responsibility and partnered with AmeriCorps.

6. Effective liaison with the State provided additional support. The National Guard was a key element, but those resources are state allocated, so it is important that someone who is familiar with the process stay close to them.
7. Security challenges changed radically from our normal routine. Theft and burglary were obvious concerns, but you don't just string crime scene tape around an area six miles long by a mile wide. Because we had the resources from all of those responding agencies, we were able to saturate the tornado footprint with police officers. This became particularly important after dark, as there were no lights left in the area. The same problem noted above, concerning how we dealt with public contacts in that area, was overarching. Our answer, in part, was to impose a curfew during the hours of darkness. Again, the additional officers at our disposal allowed us to enforce the curfew fairly effectively.
8. Cooperate, but control the media to the extent possible. For the most part, the media was very courteous. Our only significant problem occurred with a major network and some elitist mentality. Otherwise, we were treated fairly by the media and they tried to cooperate within the boundaries of their jobs. The most important lesson that came from our dealings with the media had to do with the dynamics of public information when working with several government agencies. There is the need for a single, consistent message and it was challenging to get all of the players to agree on the message. This was not a result of lacking a cooperative spirit. It had to do with conflicting interests and the disparate effects of any single message on a variety of entities. When the messages conflicted was when we suffered the most from the media. A single point of release would have been helpful and could have saved a lot of heartburn.

Joplin's response and recovery has been the subject of many questions and comments. Unlike any of my previous experiences, what really set this response apart was that there was very little political infighting. No single person or entity seemed intent upon having control, or receiving credit. Each response element and each level of government filled their individual role effectively. That effective dynamic continues as Joplin's recovery moves forward. In Joplin, government has done what it is supposed to do, rather than what it normally does.

Keith Stammer – Emergency Management Coordinator

I have been in emergency services for 25 years, including firefighting, medical response and 911 dispatching. For the last 20 years I have been an Emergency Manager, serving in Kansas and now Missouri. Looking back over those years, I can see how they prepared me for a disaster such as the May 22, 2011 EF5 that struck Joplin...and yet, they didn't.

Preparation for a disaster is a matter of education, training and experience. Education comes from attending hours of classes on subjects ranging from Incident Command to Public Information to Hazard Mitigation Planning. Training comes from practical exercises that test classroom education by requiring a demonstrated ability to apply what has been learned. Experience comes from taking that education and training and using it in actual, everyday situations that don't quite match what has been taught and exercised.

The problem, so many times, is that we educate and train based on our past experience of what has happened, and not so much on what could happen. The Joplin tornado is a prime example of what could happen, but one that is not often used in our classrooms. In the past we have trained for tornados, but never one that would strike us so hard that it would overwhelm our local resources immediately, thus requiring us to reach out to a large number of people and organizations for help and support, attempt to coordinate their efforts and all the while maintain ongoing, viable City operations. This has certainly been a learning experience.

Here are some lessons learned by me, from the perspective of Emergency Management.

1. As an Emergency Manager (or any other department or agency head) your job is not to do the work, but rather to see that the work gets done. It is easy to put your head down and get lost in the details. The real value of all those years of education, training and experience comes from being able to recognize a need and find the right resource to fill it.
2. Pre-disaster relationships are a must. The old saying is "The disaster scene is NOT the place to exchange business cards". In the first 72 hours after the tornado, there was no department or agency head that came into my Emergency Operations Center that I had not already met and worked with in either training or actual prior disasters.
3. Post-disaster relationships are built on the trust that comes from working together on the disaster. Knowing the capabilities, and limitations, of each participating agency makes it so much easier to work together during the recovery phase.
4. Stay in your box. It is easy to get pulled in many directions during a disaster recovery, even to the point of moving into areas of need that require expertise and experience outside of your own. People will request comments and opinions on many topics, some of which are not in your own area of expertise. It is best to remain focused on your own area.
5. Employ Unified Command. This is a phrase used in Emergency Management that means working together as department/agency heads to establish needs, set priorities, manage resources, and accomplish overall goals. This approach works well for both the initial disaster management and the long term recovery that will follow. Clear lines of authority, definitive goals, and knowledge of each department/agency capabilities all combine to make for a successful effort at rebuilding.

6. Keep a sense of perspective. This is easiest done by listening to the stories of others who also worked the disaster. Understand their contributions to the effort, their successes and failures, their vision of what the future holds. Doing so will lend an idea of where you, and others, fit in the overall effort.
7. Look to yourself. Post-Traumatic Stress is a fact of life. It is easy to ignore...at first. But it is something with which you must deal at some point in the aftermath of the event. Listen to what others are telling you about yourself. Value their input and seek professional help to deal with the stress and strain.

Finally, I would like to make one last observation: We are but ordinary people who found ourselves in extraordinary circumstances. We stepped up to meet the challenge presented us. We have done what was needed in order to recover and restore. In so doing we have been changed by the experience. How we approach the next challenge will, in large part, be affected by the change within us. “Adjust, adapt, overcome” is the mantra we continue to live by.

Mitch Randles – Fire Chief

On May 22, 2011 shortly after an EF-5 Tornado had damaged or destroyed around 1/3 of our City, I began to survey the damage in order to formulate an action plan for what our first steps would be in performing the search and rescue process. As I saw the extent of the completeness of the devastation and the length of the damage path, I quickly realized that this was a situation much larger and more complex than our Department or even our region could handle on its own. What I didn't know at that time was that not only did we have a daunting long term task ahead of us in performing search and rescue, cleaning up the City, and assisting in rebuilding, which included two of our five fire stations, but I too was a tornado victim. My home of 16 years had been destroyed as the tornado moved through the City of Duquesne just East of Joplin.

The lessons which I believe have been and would be the most valuable if this was to happen again are:

1. **Ask for Help.** No department or city has the resources to deal with this type of an event without significant amounts of assistance. The level of destruction and the size of the damage path was overwhelming. We used both the state and interstate mutual aid systems to request resources to help us with the search and rescue process. This included specialized resources which include multiple Federal and State USAR teams, numerous search dog teams and four incident management/support teams to help with the incident.
2. **Throw the plan out the window.** I have been asked about our emergency plan and if it was used during our event. The answer is both yes and no. In the early days of the event the answer is no, the scope of the event and the level of destruction far and away overwhelmed our emergency plan. It would have overwhelmed every disaster plan I read prior to and following our event as well.
3. **Maintain control.** While this seems somewhat self-serving, it is vital that you maintain control and accountability of the crews and personnel working in the damage area. Following our tornado, public safety personnel poured into the area, some were requested, some self-deployed. Self-deployed resources more often than not work outside the chain of command and are prone to free-lance instead of following the plans developed by command personnel. This results in ineffective and repetitive search and rescue efforts which follow no pattern or plan and is likely to miss people in need and leave large areas unsearched. Additionally, we had severe storms in the area for the three days following the initial storm so it was vital that everyone could be accounted for and warned of pending conditions which would be dangerous to personnel. At around 2:00 am I sent several teams of firefighters out to collect the self-deployed resources so we could fold them into the search and rescue plan and coordinate everyone's efforts in a controlled and managed effort.
4. **Develop relationships prior to the event.** Prior to May 22, 2011 our Department had spent years developing relationships with other departments in our region. The original focus of these relationships was to pool resources in the event of a terrorist event in the region. As a result of this work, on May 22 I was able to contact these other departments and knew what resources were coming and knew most of the personnel responding by name. This was extremely helpful to be able to look at a familiar face and put that person right to work in their field of expertise with minimal training or

discussion. The development of these relationships prior to events cannot be over emphasized as they had a significantly positive effect on the outcome of our event.

5. **Don't take "no" for an answer.** Often in times of disaster the first arriving responders or personnel are not the top level management personnel. When asking these first on scene personnel for additional resources or to perform tasks, the first response to those question will be "NO, we can't do that". I set the tone of our event within the first few hours when the first couple of groups I had contact with initially told us "no" to our requests. I quickly realized that I was not going to be able to accept "no" as answers to requests. If an initial request was refused, I asked for the next level supervisor or a person who was authorized to say "yes". Almost universally when talking with this person and explaining the situation the answer quickly became "yes".
6. **Perception of time is everything.** During any emergency event, requests for assistance or work assignments are never completed as fast as what you want or expect. Time is significantly compressed by the need and desire to perform search and rescue as quickly as possible. Obviously the quicker you find someone and remove them from harm's way the better. But time issues continue to create problems even today with the recovery of the City and our Department. It is important to recognize that while you want your recovery to happen as quickly as possible, it is also important that it happens correctly. It is vital that recovery and reconstruction is done with an eye to the future. This requires that you resist the urge to just quickly build something to get something done, but you make sure that it will meet your and the community's needs well into the future.
7. **Recovery of personnel.** It is important to recognize that everyone deals with loss and disasters in their own ways. No one way is more correct than the other. There have been significant pressures to get personnel into counseling. While I agree that providing availability of counseling to everyone affected by our situation is vital, forcing personnel into counseling is not the answer. I, myself, can attest to the fact that the time for me to deal with what has happened is coming but today or even tomorrow is not that day. So make sure that there are long term plans to provide for counseling as needed or requested.
8. **Are you prepared?** This is a question that I ask during every presentation on the tornado I make. When I ask, I am of course, talking about are you as a city or organization prepared to deal with the aftermath of a disaster in your jurisdiction. But I also ask on a personal level. Are you prepared to lose your home and all of your belongings? Do you have someone who can step up and deal with the insurance, clean up, and search for a temporary or long term living arrangement? I for one wasn't and I would imagine that most people aren't. Now is the time to think about these problems and issues is before they arise.

Lynn Onstot - City Public Information Officer

Be prepared – you hear it, you practice it, and then wham! You are tested and you have to know it. Fortunately, the City of Joplin had held exercises in disaster management numerous times. Probably more importantly, we had opened the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) three times in a two year period – BEFORE May 22, 2011. So I knew my role – to communicate important messages to the public in a critical time.

Although I knew my role as the PIO, it did not prepare me for the workload that this disaster brought to our community. When a national disaster hits, the national media comes knocking. Joplin had more than 300 news agencies in our city within the first week. Many had never been to the Midwest, and most had never heard of Joplin, Missouri before May 22.

Because of this media surge, one of the first tasks to be addressed was to write an organizational bio sheet. I wanted to ensure that the world received the correct image of our city, and not have someone else define us without the facts. If you don't have a bio of your organization, I'd strongly encourage spending some time developing this summary stating who you are as a company, a city, a church, or an organization and what makes you unique or special compared to others in your category. This sheet was handed out to every press member we came in contact with during those first few days.

Preparation also includes training staff to ensure 24/7 coverage within the PIO area. We had discussed this, but unfortunately had not implemented this prior to May 22nd. As a "one man shop", I typically am the one sitting in the EOC, getting the information from key personnel, writing it up for news distribution, working with the City Manager and Attorney to ensure message is appropriate, etc. In the past, I've had some help for phone calls coming in, scheduling press conferences, making copies, and such. But on May 22nd I needed A LOT of help.

Because we had not trained other staff members, many of them did not truly understand the sense of urgency that comes with "being first, being right and being credible", the creed from emergency management communicators. Within the 72 hours, we received hundreds of calls, messages, questions and requests for information from the news media and the public. There is stress not just from the quantity of these, but also because I knew there was important information to get out there. We needed to help calm people, educate the public, and tell the world that we were okay and had begun the process of search and rescue, and as time passed, communicate other important aspects of the recovery process.

City staff came in to answer phones, and help with message preparation. It was clumsy at first, but several employees stepped into the areas that needed help: answering phones and taking messages, responding to emails, social media responses, general message drafting, media relations, and monitoring news media reports. It worked, but had training occurred prior to this, people would have been more comfortable fitting into the flow of communications in a crisis situation. I also had reached out to my colleagues in Springfield, Missouri (about 60 miles away), and many came to address specific PIO tasks I needed during the first month.

Because of the size of the disaster, the PIO area was moved from its usual location in the EOC. Unfortunately, there was only ONE phone in the new area and two computers! That left a lot of people standing wanting to help. Later we were able to make some things work better and added a computer here and there, although there was just one printer for our area. So -- **Plan ahead.** Check your work area prior to disasters, looking for necessary technologies, and if there is not

enough connectivity - **get it wired now**. Work with the tech team so they understand your needs, and you can communicate immediately.

Cell phones are imperative during a crisis of course. You can continue to use your personal line, however I'd suggest cell phones with NEW numbers that are NOT connected to your personal cell. By doing so, you may end up carrying two phones, but the new line for the disaster will eventually go away, and your personal number is not listed on every piece of communication you sent during the disaster management period.

If possible, upgrade your technology now. If your organization can afford to, have them purchase a tablet, phone and wireless connections so you can be portable as necessary. Learn how to connect all of this yourself. Tech services are pulled in many directions, so be as self-sufficient as possible. Keep them posted so they can provide assistance, but if you make a good faith effort to get yourself started, they will appreciate that and respond to you later when their other fires have been extinguished.

Location is not only important for real estate, it is also important for press conferences – especially when one-third of your town is destroyed. Think about WHERE you could hold a LARGE press conference – one involving satellite trucks, cables, wires, sound trucks, lights, LOUD generators, and then think, “what if that site is destroyed or unavailable for some reason?” Think of another location and a third. Be prepared for the worst. If your setting is outdoors, plan for an indoor venue close to the area so you can relocate the press if the weather gets bad. Develop a Press Conference Team/Checklist now. Press conference set up may be part of your normal activities, but in a crisis, you may not remember everything. The checklist ensures you remember the podium, microphones, etc. You might consider purchasing a mult box. (A mult box is a distribution amplifier that provides multiple connections for the press to connect their voice or video recorders to and provides a good audio signal.) By having one, your podium will not be cluttered with a lot of different microphones with media “flags” on them, which can be distracting to the speaker, and clutter a good shot.

Overall, preparation is key to any disaster management. This is difficult because most of us believe, “It will never happen to me.” We delay training until it fits into our schedules. Unfortunately, it will NEVER FIT into our calendars. So make time for it now. The knowledge and experience will be very helpful. In a disaster, many things compete for your time and expertise in communicating. Work the problem in front of you; find the solution to that before moving on. As a proud multi-tasker, I was surprised that I lost that skill during the stressful days, so I learned to focus on the immediate need and address that item first before moving on to something else.

Another key preparation: network with other communicators in your area. In a disaster, you may need to ask them to assist because they have a similar skillset and understand your role in the situation. “A disaster is no time to exchange business cards.” This is one of my mantras now. Get to know your colleagues; hold monthly luncheons with people having similar positions in area organizations. By building this relationship now, they will bring much-needed assets to a stressful situation. (A bonus to this – they can also be the group you meet for some R & R after hours. They understand what you are going through, and will let you talk about it if you want, or just let you be with like-minds to enjoy some down time. My group still gets together!)

Lastly, please know there are going to be days you feel everything went great, and days when you feel that everything went wrong, and you made no progress. But stay strong. Know you are making a difference. You may not know that immediately, but as days and weeks go by, you'll

begin to see things improving. Own the fact that you helped to make that happen by sharing information, giving instructions, and providing resources through your communications.

You are part of the emergency management team and are doing great things that help people in ways you will never know. Celebrate the victories, learn from the mishaps, and recognize that no matter what stage of recovery the community is experiencing, they will seek out information. So prepare yourself. You will have to write and talk about this for a very long time. It is part of you and your work every day. This may be hard some days, but it's rewarding to know that you helped someone with a simple phone number, agency referral, or a few minutes to listen and share a smile.

Jane Cage - Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team

It was May 22nd, 2012, the one year anniversary of Joplin's tornado. I was standing in front of the skeleton of St. John's Hospital with an earpiece and microphone for a remote live interview with Gwen Ifill from NPR when I heard her ask "After all, you didn't lose your house or your business, so why bother?" She was referencing the fact that I had taken on the responsibility of chairing Joplin's Citizen Advisory Recovery Team (CART). To this day, it was a surprising question but an easy answer – "I can go home at night. When I think of everyone I know who lost their home or a loved one or their business, I have time. I don't have to put my life back together." At our first recovery meeting, I looked around the room and saw the CEO of St. John's who had a hospital to rebuild. The president of Empire District Electric lost his home but needed to focus on restoring electric and infrastructure to half of Joplin. **It was the first recovery lesson that I learned – people who are not directly impacted need to step up to lead.** In the months that followed we discovered that the toll of recovery was exhausting. No one has the emotional reserve to get their own life together, rebuild a business and take on additional responsibilities as well.

The days and weeks following the tornado were surreal. We got lost driving in our own town and were grateful when someone took on the task of spray painting the names of streets at intersections. Joplin was mobilized with residents and volunteers cleaning up debris. You could get a tetanus shot on a street corner and cases of water were stacked everywhere. Through it all, there was a touching and heartfelt desire among citizens to return to "normal". We needed a mechanism to stop looking around and start looking ahead. The Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART) suggested by FEMA and mobilized by the city became just that.

When I took on the role of chairman, I will admit, I didn't have a clue about where or how to lead. The FEMA folks started inviting me to lunch every other day to discuss "possible directions and scenarios". They remind you that "every disaster is different". That may be partially true but there are elements that all disasters have in common. For us – disaster was a new experience. The government groups that came to help had far more expertise than we did. It didn't take me too long to catch on to that – and begin to ask directly for help and guidance. **Taking full advantage of the experience and expertise of federal and state agencies went a long way to move us forward.** Part of their answer was to give me a book to read – the FEMA Long Term Recovery Self-Help Guide. One Saturday, I sat out on the porch and read it from start to finish – twice. It was then that the light bulb went off about how to navigate long-term recovery. I understood that **recovery is a process and not an event.**

From the beginning, our goal was to get as much input from citizens as we could. FEMA coordinated our first public input meeting just twelve days after we met for the first time as a group. We were all worried about whether anyone would come because there were plenty of reasons not to – debris removal was in full-swing. But that afternoon and evening 350 people passed through the doors of the school gymnasium. There was a nurse who had taken care of me at St. John's eight weeks before who told me how she found her dog inside the kitchen cabinet. There was a young man I recognized from church as the caretaker of three developmentally disabled adults who had all died as a result of the tornado. People were engaged at every level – answering questions, talking with neighbors. It was good to see. After our first public meeting we published a booklet containing all the ideas we received. We handed the booklet out everywhere we could – even standing in front of Walmart. We sent a group to our college to solicit input in front of the bookstore. To touch the most difficult-to-reach residents, we sent a

group to the temporary housing units furnished by FEMA. At every step in the process we validated what we believed we were hearing by asking for confirmation. **The recovery plan belonged to everyone and the more citizens that had input the richer the plan become.**

You can expect to be pulled between process and progress. At our first public input meeting, we asked citizens to cast their vision across every sector of the community by putting their ideas on sticky notes. We received enough ideas to fill a fifty page booklet. It took time to analyze and condense them. As soon as we had the second step done, I started to feel the pull. I would see the Mayor at a meeting and he would remind me that “everyone” was waiting to figure out what to do until they knew the plan. At the same time, I was also getting cautioned that if we didn’t get a plan in place soon, Joplin would come back just the way it was before the tornado because people and businesses were rebuilding so quickly using old ways. My FEMA advisors urged me to put a solid plan in place that was well-thought out and contained the necessary elements of vision and goals. In the end, we followed the process and were glad of it. None of us ever imagined that our work would become the city’s official recovery plan.

Resist the temptation to short-change your vision. As you might imagine, there was a huge groundswell for underground utilities immediately after the tornado. As citizens started to dream, some ideas seemed hugely impractical. We decided to dream big at the end of the day. The plan is the time to figure out the what, not the how. As I look back, we’ve found ways to accomplish goals that I thought would be impossible.

By fall, the FEMA team started to wind down their presence in Joplin. Considering they were the operational support team for CART, it started to get a little lonely getting the plan written. In November, we presented the plan to the City Council. It felt like a big moment and the council chambers were packed that night. **But, a plan without direction and follow-up is just a wish-book.** That same night the Mayor called for an Implementation Task Force (ITF) to assign responsibilities and priorities to the plan. The ITF was made up of representatives of the school board, the city council, the chamber of commerce and the CART itself. That meant another round of work for all of us – and more time. In January of 2012, we convened a joint meeting of the City Council, the School Board, the Chamber Board, and the Cart Board. It was the first time in the history of our city that all of those groups had ever met together. That endorsement let everyone in the community move forward on the same page.

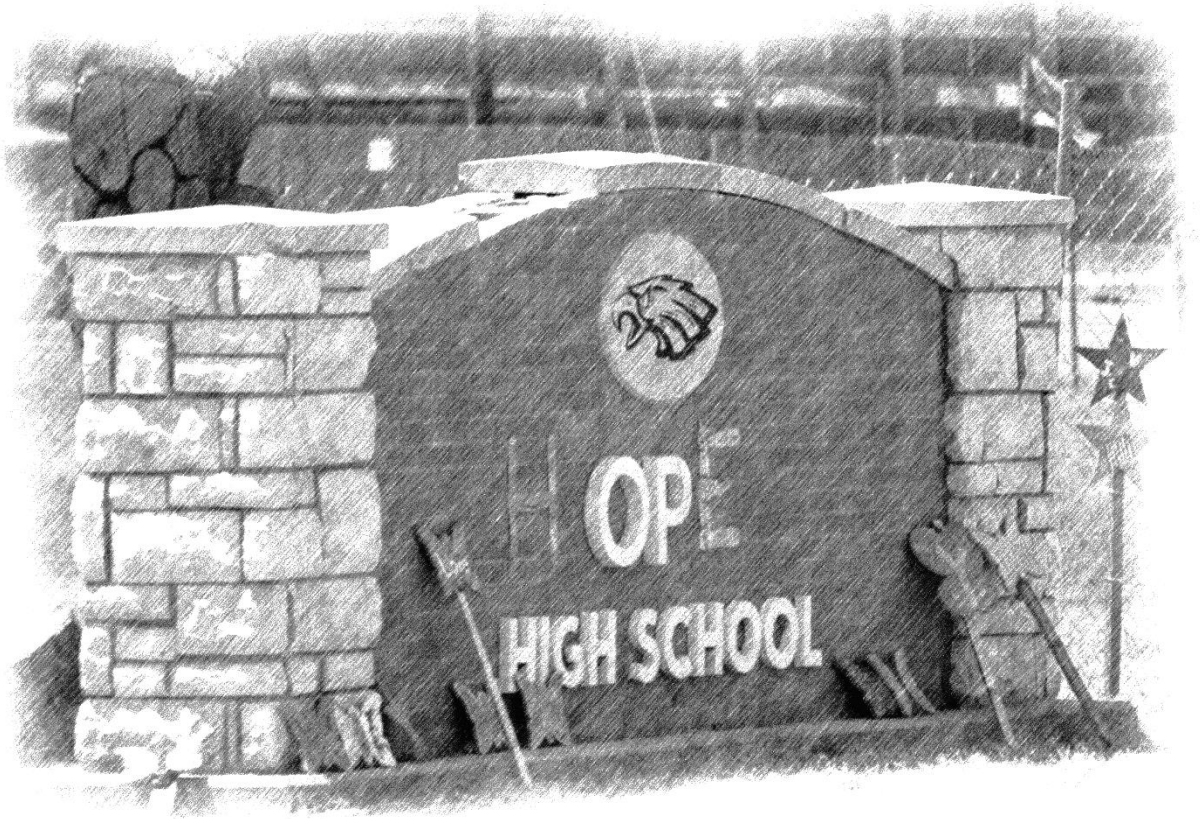
Enlist outside help to accomplish the plan. We held a recovery forum and with the help of FEMA and the Chamber invited foundations, federal agencies and state agencies to attend. We presented the plan and asked each group represented to walk through the plan to see where their agencies might fit in. Even as long as a year later, we are still getting responses that turn into substantial assistance.

So, what would I tell you if you are taking on the job of leading citizen participation?

1. Remember that you work for citizens – our purpose has always been to listen and report and then to be their advocate.
2. Remaining objective and independent is absolutely essential.
3. It’s a privilege to do the work. I’ve been touched when someone that I’ve never met comes up to me at the grocery store to say “thank you”. That is the best kind of reward.

4. Use your role to build bridges between other groups. In recovery, everyone is running a race and generally in their own lane. Help them to look side-to-side and communicate to strengthen the effort.
5. Be ready to be in for the long haul. Don't just drop off the plan at the doorstep of government. Your continued presence can be a reminder of who everyone should be working for – the citizens that trusted you with their hopes and dreams.

Education



CJ Huff – Joplin Superintendent of Schools

May 22, 2011 represented an end and a beginning for the City of Joplin. Much has been written about our recovery efforts, resiliency, and the strength of our people. I often get asked what makes Joplin different. Half-jokingly and half seriously I typically respond that there are more chainsaws AND people who know how to use them per capita here than any place on earth. We are tough. We work together, play together, and pray together. And not surprisingly on May 22nd we came together. Beneath the tough exterior of this community you will find a lot of heart. Not just a little, but a lot. I have heard it said you judge a community by the way it cares for its children. Without question, Joplin loves its kids.

Fortunately or unfortunately I was the person sitting in the school superintendent seat when the most costly tornado in U.S. history came to town. I wouldn't wish that experience in the hours and days following the storm on anyone. It was hard for all of us. As a community we had lost a lot, but we kept our composure. We came together when it would have been easy to fall apart.

Throughout life we all face seemingly insurmountable challenges. Moments that define who we are on the inside. As my dad would say, moments which "test your metal." One of my favorite quotes was made by Winston Churchill, "When you are going through hell...keep going." In other words, don't stand still in the face of adversity. Forward on.

The magnitude of the crisis we faced really didn't hit me until the early morning hours of May 24th. I had stopped to rest. The adrenaline rush of the prior 36 hours had worn off. Reality had set in. I had begun reflecting on my personal journey since the warning sirens sounded. My own near death experience as I unknowingly drove into the tornado going home from graduation ceremonies. The visions of the walking wounded as I made my way through the rubble on foot immediately after the storm. The first responders tending to the injured and watching over those we had lost. At that point, the death toll was rising, the weather continued to be miserable which hampered search and rescue efforts, and I knew we likely still had adults and children trapped under the rubble.

Our enrollment was 7,747 on May 22nd and I could only account for two them: my son and daughter. To put it in perspective, if you have ever lost sight of your child in a store, multiply that sickening feeling by 7,747 knowing that there would not be a happy ending in many cases. It hurt.

The storm had impacted half of my district. We lost our only high school, technical school, a middle school, and two elementary schools. Another elementary was heavily damaged, as well as our administration building. Roughly 4,200 kids had no place to attend school and over 3,000 of my children lived in the path of the storm.

We had set up shop at North Middle School, just outside of the disaster zone. So as I laid on a nurse's cot at 2:00 a.m. on May 24th at North Middle School, the magnitude of the losses, both known and unknown, hit me hard. I have to admit I had a good cry. Then I reverted back to what I have always done when I have felt lost. I prayed. I prayed for our missing children. I prayed for strength, I prayed for wisdom, and I prayed for clarity. Immediately after I prayed I gathered my composure and began asking myself this one simple question, "What is our role in this crisis?" The clarity came in the obvious answer. We are in the kid business and our job was to take care of our kids.

At that point I got up from my cot, went to my computer and got back to work. Between 2 a.m. and 8 a.m. I analyzed the individual strengths of my team members, developed a new

organizational chart with task assignments based on those strengths, and put together my agenda for the next morning.

At 8 a.m. I got my team together, we worked through the agenda and established job duties and responsibilities. I concluded that meeting by simply stating, "School starts in 84 days...let's get to work." And they did. I couldn't be more proud of my team and my Board of Education. Several of them were dealing with personal losses of their own, but stepped up to the challenge and made great things happen.

On August 17, 2011 we reopened schools as promised. We maintained 95% of our enrollment even though a full third of our community was destroyed. Our families stayed and our kids came back. Although I was very proud we had hit our goal, what that day did for me more than anything was reaffirm what I already knew: our schools are a critical part of our community. Seeing kids reconnect with friends they hadn't had the opportunity to say goodbye to at the end of the year; hugging their teachers; safety; love and normalcy. It was the relationships that carried the day.

I often get asked what lessons I have learned. I can honestly say there are more than I can share. But if I were to pick just one, it would have to be that there is more good in this world than people realize. People came from all over the world to help us - they rallied to our cause. Mother Nature had sucker punched us. But good people, from all walks of life, worked side-by-side to get us back on our feet and together, we punched her right back.

Joplin's recovery effort is not over. The final chapter has yet to be written as some of our greatest challenges lie ahead of us as we try to build a better Joplin. As a school community our mantra remains unchanged. Take care of our school family and continue to do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, for every child, every day...no matter what.

Max Dupree once said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality and the last is to say thank you." As a school district we defined our reality quickly and reacted to that reality. I couldn't be more proud of my people. They have done and continue to do amazing work. And although I continue to pray for our community, I also pray that I live long enough to repay the tremendous debt of gratitude I owe the people of this great nation. We wouldn't be where we are today without you. Thank you for what you have done and continue to do.

Angie Besendorfer - Joplin Assistant Superintendent of Schools

As an educator, I have participated in multiple opportunities to *PLAN* for a disaster and I can honestly say that it was helpful to have those experiences regardless of how real life didn't match our contingency planning. In Joplin, our tornado destroyed the middle third of our town including hitting 10 school buildings – destroying 6. Fortunately, May 22, 2011 was a Sunday and our students were not in those buildings. Unfortunately, we had 4,200 students who didn't have a school ready for their education on May 23rd. This brief essay is intended to share a bit about my personal experience as Assistant Superintendent of Joplin Schools during my most challenging year as a leader.

First, I'd like to share about my personal story. I was traveling home from our high school graduation ceremony when the sirens sounded the first time. I made it home as did my daughter so we were all home when they sounded again. Safe in our concrete room, we were fine but knew immediately the surrounding area wasn't based on the 4x8 boards in our yard. Phones weren't working and text messages quickly became the only means of (unreliable) communication. I learned of damage about a mile from my home which would have included a school so I left home to check on its condition.

I had no idea what I was in for. My journey that evening included picking up people along the way, including a school secretary with her daughter, their dog and a basket containing "all that was left." I delivered them to their destination winding around downed power lines and driving past indescribable destruction. I learned about the high school being hit and tried to get there only to arrive at our administration building where the roof was missing from the east end of the building. That was when I snapped ... snapped from the daze of trying to figure out what had happened to the administrator taking charge. A teacher stopped at the office as I was walking out. I sent him to his building to see if it had electricity and to open the school as a shelter. I traveled to the command center and began to participate in the community recovery operations. It was amazing to see the plans that had been developed come alive and really work although it still seemed like a nightmare!

The command center was filled with workers communicating with the rescue workers in the field. They asked for school buses to assist with transportation so I assisted by getting a radio to the bus barn so staffers there could be in communication. I didn't even realize at the time that it was Sunday evening and the bus barn shouldn't have been open. School buses became ambulances that delivered patients to hospitals across the region. I was a part of a system where everyone worked together to do the best they could in a situation that we never anticipated in our planning. I went home to sleep at 4:00 am in order to meet again with our superintendent at 7:00 am. We had to figure out a plan before we met with the other school administrators and principals at 8:00 am.

There was a lot to focus on in the first few days. I'll use bullets to help articulate the important matters of the first week.

- **PEOPLE FIRST:** We needed to account for all of our people – students and employees. Each school principal/facility director was responsible for finding out about the well-being of their own staff and to report it to an appointed member of our leadership council. Immediately after the storm I couldn't think about the tremendous loss of life we were facing. We just had to figure out the status of our school family. We contacted our student information system company and received a copy of the student data as it

had been backed up the previous Friday night. This helped principals to account for each member of their school community. We collected information as best we could regarding their well-being, their location if injured, the safety of their family members, and damage to their home. We accounted for all staff members by Wednesday, but it took until 3:15 pm Friday to account for the last student. This was accomplished by a home visit which included a pit bull attack on the principal, but the student was alive and well.

- **SECURING VALUABLES:** Each principal/director was responsible for assessing their facility site and reporting back to the team. While safety was the first consideration, they needed to secure school valuables and records.
- **WAR ROOM:** We designated a room in our temporary administration location that was only accessible to select personnel. This is where we maintained the list of those deceased, injured, and those who had lost their homes. We maintained the position that it was our responsibility to account for our “school family” but not our responsibility to report to the media about our family members. This was difficult because the national media really wanted the stories of the trauma from the tornado.
- **STAFF ENGAGEMENT:** Our principals and central office administrators met daily beginning that first Monday. This continued for about three weeks. We assigned tasks and created a buddy system for schools that were hit by the tornado. We also hosted our first voluntary meeting for all staff members on Wednesday and continued daily meetings for the first couple of weeks. We shared our school family news at these meetings. We communicated clearly about what was okay to share outside the family and what was part of our internal school family news (i.e. names of deceased). We also engaged the staff to help locate and account for our school family. Teachers jumped in and worked to find our kids. They used all means of communication including home visits and Facebook. Some even contacted previous out-of-town schools that our students had attended to get previous emergency contact information to see if those contacts had information. Where there were multi-student families it became important for our teams to communicate with other schools within our system to prevent duplicating contact. We were only successful in accounting for our kids because of the great leadership exhibited by our principals and teachers.
- **DONATIONS:** Everyone wanted to help and we didn’t really know what we needed. Many people wanted to give directly to the school, which immediately made us into a distribution center. This was hard! We did not really have the experience or manpower to do this. If at all possible, we would recommend that donations not related to education (things like clothing, diapers, food, etc.) go to the community distribution centers instead of the school. Before we knew it we were in the distribution business and it took on a life of its own. We filled a double-sized gym and a very large commons area with donations. Getting out of the donations business proved to be difficult as well. Our advice is to request that people wait to send items needed for school and also to be bold enough to answer “money” when people ask what you need. We would also caution accepting donations because we ended up having to lease storage space to deal with the massive amounts of donations of school related items.
- **SAYING GOODBYE FOR SUMMER:** Students and teachers needed closure after the tragedy. We arranged for every school to have a summer kick-off event to provide time for kids to see their friends and teachers and get their things left at school (if possible).

Some schools planned outings such as bowling while others schools met at their building. Everyone got to hug and see their school family again.

- **FUNERALS:** We designated two people to be the lead on funerals. They attended on behalf of the district and ensured that school staff was aware. Furthermore, we provided a framed card for the family so they would remember that their loss was our loss as well and that we would not forget. We lost 7 students and one staff member. The people assigned to this task had the most difficult job of all.
- **TO REPAIR or TEMPORARY RELOCATE:** That was the question. We had to determine whether a school could be repaired before school started in August or if we needed to find a temporary location. We looked for large open spaces that could be leased and renovated to hold school. It turned out to be a great decision. We leased several spaces including an empty big box at the mall and two 50,000 sq. ft. warehouses. We also moved some elementary schools around and added modular classroom structures to existing sites in order to have enough space to hold school. We made it our mantra that we could have a temporary location but it couldn't provide temporary education. This was, after all, their only second (or any other) grade year. It had to be high quality. Locating leased space was challenging because many businesses and healthcare facilities also needed space. Keeping communication loops open with other community players helped us to acquire the space we needed. We learned that was wise to lease spaces because it turned out to be less expensive than creating a field full of modular buildings to create a school. We also learned about the FEMA 50% rule, which meant that if the damage was over 50% of the value of the building then FEMA would participate in rebuilding rather than just repair.
- **KEEPING SCHOOLS TOGETHER:** We made very conscious decisions to handle carefully the losses within the hardest hit schools. We pledged to rebuild and to keep those kids together in our temporary settings. It might have been easier to spread the elementary students across other elementary schools. We felt that with the major losses the students faced in losing their home, school, and church that they needed to keep what they still had ... their school family. Allowing students to continue to have the connections with their teachers and friends also helped with our own healing as a system. We made sure that everyone understood that where they lived did not matter. If they were a Joplin Eagle on May 22, they were welcome to attend Joplin Schools in August as well. This provided consistency and healing for our students and teachers.

Those weeks beyond the first week were long and hard. The days started early and lasted well into the evenings as we planned for starting school on time. Many areas had to be considered including:

- **ENROLLMENT:** How many kids would return to school in Joplin? We had to make staffing decisions and facility decisions based on projected enrollment. We used technology to help. We created an online form for parents to complete to tell us where their child would go to school. We called those who did not complete the survey. It turned out that we had 90% of our students return after the tornado. We believe we maintained our enrollment because of the good use of media sharing about the quality schools that we would provide. We also publicized that if they were a Joplin Eagle in May they could still be an Eagle in August and that we would provide transportation even if they lived temporarily outside the district.

- **TEMPORARY SPACES:** We worked with three different architecture firms and the Army Corp of Engineers to create our temporary spaces. There were 84 days between the tornado and the first day of school and we made it! Knowing that the decisions we were making for temporary spaces were only for 2 or 3 years helped us not to worry as much about details; however, maintaining that the spaces had to be for learning was nonnegotiable.
- **EQUIPMENT:** We had to bid and purchase replacement equipment including furniture, technology equipment, band instruments and much more. We had to order furniture in colors that were available for quick ship because summer is the traditional busy season for school vendors. We were careful about our bid directions for installation. We were working in uncertain times and the vendors that partnered with us had to really become our partners. We were very fortunate in that regard.
- **SUPPLIES:** It was also necessary to assess the supply needs for the schools. This was difficult to do because of the massive amount of donations. We found at times that after we had ordered supplies then magically those supplies would come in as donations as well giving us double what we needed. We learned not to sweat that stuff because there was no way to predict.
- **BEWARE OF GIFTS:** I have stated many times that we accomplished all that we did because we held hands with the world. We had volunteers who helped make it happen. Additionally, we received great gifts that allowed us to do wonderful things. For example, the United Arab Emirates donated \$1 million to start the laptop initiative for 21st Century learning at our high school. Many vendors offered to donate items. We learned quickly that we needed to ask questions. Some software vendors offered to donate their systems for six months or a year of use. The reality of that situation is that we would need to train staff on programs that they might have liked but we would have been unable to afford pre or post-tornado. In other situations it was worth the short time frame because the software was very helpful to students and teachers. Our teachers also received amazing support through “DonorsChoose”. We even provided training to teachers on how to apply for needed items using this program.
- **SILVER LINING:** We capitalized on the fact that we had dreams that were not possible before that could become realized now. For instance, we had been studying moving to a 1 to 1 environment at the high school where every student would have a laptop computer. After all the textbooks were blown away, we made that happen and did not even buy digital textbooks. We also took the opportunity to step back and dream about the future of schools in Joplin. We designed 21st century facilities that are flexible enough to embrace learning for the next 100 years. We also discovered that people were more innovative in this difficult situation. I am so proud of how our staff handled the temporary settings and the innovations we implemented in the wake of this disaster.

Recovery is not a sprint but a marathon. Two years after our tornado, we are still running that marathon. If you have the unfortunate experience to need this information, please reach out to us for support. We have made mistakes and also some very fortunate decisions along the way. We believe helping others in this situation is one way we can pay it forward for the outpouring of support we had in our recovery.

Kerry Sachetta - Principal Joplin High School

The date of May 22, 2011, will be forever remembered in Joplin, Missouri, as the most devastating and cataclysmic event in the history of our small Midwestern town. As principal of the destroyed Joplin High School, I like many others, was confused and searching for answers. The following information will outline our lessons learned as well as our attempt to “get it right” so that both healing and learning could take place for the 2011-2012 school year.

First Things First: Rescue and Recovery

The first thing that we had to do was to make sure that we could account for all of our students and staff members. We learned quickly that we could find many of our students through social media. Facebook was a big help to us during this time as we were able to find kids quickly. It took us almost a week, but we did find all of the students of Joplin High School. When responsible for accounting for 2200 students in a crisis situation, you must be able to mobilize people in the organization to take on the challenge. Our secretaries and several staff members reviewed class rosters, started making calls, and started communicating with students through Facebook. After several days, we divided up into two groups and took a list of students to check on personally until all students were accounted for.

One thing that we learned is that it is important for the different schools and grade levels to communicate about all family members who are accounted for. I know that we duplicated efforts several times. We could have done a more effective job of communicating with the different buildings as we found our students. One practice that proved very effective was logging all of our students who lost homes and had family members injured or lost. This allowed us to concentrate efforts for services immediately and to know who to monitor during the school year.

A few years ago, we trained a number of staff members throughout the district so that each school would have a team that could handle emergency situations. Our Emergency Response Teams were made up of staff members trained in: Search and Rescue (Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) trained); Security; Medical Operations; Psychological First Aid; and Family Reunification.

The training they received was invaluable during this time. Even though the devastation did not take place while school was in session, the training helped us mobilize and assume the leadership capacity required in each of the damaged schools.

What We Learned from the Damage of the School

For many years we placed kids in hallways during threats of storms, believing they would be safe. However, video footage during the May 2011 tornado proved the hallways became wind tunnels because of the magnitude of the 200-plus mph winds. Dangerous debris including glass, street signs, car parts, and furniture were found in different places of the hallways after the storm. In a couple of places, walls from exterior rooms collapsed into the hallway. As a result of our investigation of the video and meticulous review of the damage of the facility, we no longer utilize the hallways for storm shelters for students. Now we use the following in this order:

1. **FEMA Shelters:** Our first choice is a FEMA certified storm shelter.
2. **Basements:** For our schools that do not have the temporary FEMA shelters, we have cleared basements for shelter locations.

3. **Interior Rooms – without windows:** For schools that don't have FEMA shelters or basements, we have identified interior rooms without windows.
4. **Exterior Rooms – without windows or exterior doors:** If we cannot adequately place students into the above areas, our last choice would be to use rooms that do have exterior walls and that do not have windows or exterior doors.

Another lesson from the Joplin tornado that surfaced during the initial stages of recovery was the need for a more comprehensive communication system. Before the tornado, our school district relied a UHF, two-way radio system. A district-wide radio system allowing communications across the district was necessary for operations. Therefore, thinking about a tragedy when purchasing a two-way communication system is important so that all schools can communicate effectively. Because landline and cell phone communications were inoperable, an extensive school based two-way communication system would have been very helpful.

The Loss of Two Fine Young Men

The saddest situation that we dealt with was the loss of two of our students at the high school. Both students were bright, fine young men with many friends. I attended their services and both young men had fitting celebrations of their lives that were characterized both by the location of the service, their friends and family, and those in attendance. The common thread was each student's love of life, the stories about them from their friends and family members, their sense of humor, and the fact they were both very talented in their own way.

As principal, I learned I needed to be ready and be able to respond when a parent asked for me to be a part of a funeral service. It was an honor to speak on behalf of the school about one of the students. It was important to talk to the young man's pastor and family representatives before the funeral. It is one thing to be able to talk about a young man from the perspective of the school, but it is equally important to have a sense of the family's wishes and their perspective on the student, too. As a result, I was able to stand and deliver a fitting tribute about an outstanding young man for the family. Quite honestly, the family's strength is what helped me be able to speak with clarity and conviction.

Handling the Media and Well Wishers

One of the biggest issues in any type of tragedy is handling the media. Telling the story appropriately and accurately was critical. In addition, handling the press is very important to the faculty and staff. The community, as well as the faculty and staff, will see and hear the building leader on television and read his or her comments in the paper. Feelings of security and hope can depend upon the way the building leader presents him or her-self, or how he or she is quoted. It was very important to speak clearly, offer hope, and give credit to those involved regarding their work and efforts.

Our district acquired the services of several public relations specialists to work with us for the first three weeks after the tragedy. This proved to be very helpful as the media coverage was intense. It was very important that we utilize their expertise in handling a tragic situation. It was critical that we developed talking points so that we could respond to the media appropriately. We needed to be able give proper attention to student casualties without releasing information ahead of the parents or the authorities.

There was a lot of interest from around the country about our story. Because we were the only public high school in our city, naturally we garnered a lot of attention. It was very important as the principal that I meet and greet as many of the well-wishers as possible. There were so many

people coming to Joplin just to offer support and to help us in any way they could. I wanted to be able to give every one of them at least some time because of their efforts. It was important to me to spend quality time with as many individuals as possible and listen to what they had to say. Many people offered us ideas as well as resources and support for our effort to recover. We gained a significant amount of information from our visitors, and their offers of support and resources came in very handy during the rebuilding phase, also.

Learning about Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)

We were able to have a really good training opportunity for three days during the summer about post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). Professors and representatives from the University of Missouri partnered with the Ozark Center of Joplin to offer the training. The idea was to be able to train administrators, counselors, and other key personnel about signs of PTSD so that we could respond quickly and appropriately.

In addition, we hired nine counselors and they were stationed all around the district to respond to different kinds of trauma for both students and adults. It was critical that they were in the schools on a daily basis and were able to collect a log or a record of all of the students with whom they worked. The work of the counselors proved to be invaluable in helping students and staff members cope with the daily stresses of their lives outside of school as well as at school. The ability to use the services of the extra counselors was extremely important to our success. Without the extra counseling support many students' and staff members' emotional needs would not have been met during the school year.

Coming Together: Reunion Activities for the Students

Another very important aspect of dealing with a tragedy is recognizing the need for the students to reconnect after the event. The reunification of the students proved to be a very successful activity. We learned that the need for students to have a place to meet with each other and staff members to get some reassurance and to share stories was very important, and holding it at a school location helped tremendously.

The need to share one's experiences with his/her closest friends is critical. Our plan was find a place with which the students were familiar to have our activity. With our school destroyed we chose our football stadium, Junge Field, to be the place for the students to reunite. We had our counselors, teachers, staff members, and local youth ministers on hand for support, and they did a good job making connections with students who needed extra support. We created a semi-festive, but informal atmosphere, with music, giveaways, and drinks. The students stayed and visited with each other, and the adults, for about an hour-and-a-half. It was definitely a success.

We also worked with our local bowling alley to offer the students a place to come and meet each other based on their grade levels. The younger students met in one particular bowling alley and the older students met at another location. The students were offered pizza at both locations and they were able to return their school resources, textbooks, instruments, etc.

The students generally found these activities to be helpful. Our project graduation group for the senior class also proceeded with their activity for the students who had just graduated. They decided to use one of the middle schools for their activity and it was very successful activity. It wasn't the same as a typical "stay up all night after graduation activity," but they had a really good party for the students. We found that allowing events to continue as much as possible was important to our students.

Meeting the Volunteers

The volunteers were special to everyone throughout the whole process. If not for the volunteers we would not have been able to have school when we did or accomplish the tasks needed to have school. It was very obvious the construction company did a great job building, the architects did a wonderful job designing, and everybody connected in the school system worked very hard organizing the new school. But, at the end of the day, there was only so much that could be done by certain groups and the volunteers made the difference.

We were blessed to have an enormous number of people come to Joplin to volunteer and help us. People came from all over the United States and many spent several days or weeks participating in the recovery and clean-up effort. The numbers were so staggering that we actually hired two people to manage and organize the volunteers. We had so many projects that needed to be completed throughout the district that organizing the volunteers to help maximize their efficiency proved to be very valuable.

One of the biggest lessons I learned was that when people come to help, you have to set aside your feelings of damaged pride from your helplessness, and just let them help. When people come to help, that is what they want to do. They feel a connection to the situation and it is important for them, or they would not have made the journey. Allowing people to help is sometimes uncomfortable and not easy in every situation. It can make you feel vulnerable or exposed. But there was no way we could do what was needed without the help of many people. Many people came to Joplin and targeted the school system as their interest area for assistance. The stories on television or in print made an indelible mark on so many people. Because most everyone can identify with a school and their own fond memories of their school days, many people felt the need to help the students get back to normal.

So, understanding the magnitude of the situation and taking stock of the tasks at hand allowed us to utilize the volunteers to accomplish what was needed and to provide a sense of community to the many people who came to Joplin to make a difference. It would be difficult to count the number of people I was able to take time to thank for their service.

Again, without the volunteers we could not have accomplished what we did, and what we experienced gave us much more faith in humanity than we could have ever imagined.

Designing the Temporary School

The design phase of the temporary school was a real culture builder for the faculty to look ahead and to help them move forward in their thinking. After the decision was made to put our 9th and 10th graders in a school that was very traditional, but had all of the amenities of a typical school, we turned our attention to the design of a 90,000 square-foot space for a temporary 11th and 12th grade school. This process proved to be very valuable for the students, staff, and community. For two weeks the architects made concept drawings and presented the ideas approved by administration to students, teachers, parents, board of education members, and community members. The process was repeated several times in order to gain valuable input to improve the design, and to build support for the new “temporary” design.

The ideas introduced would also be concepts that would later be part of the drawings and design of the new permanent school. It was critical for as many stakeholders as possible to be part of the planning. When the architects we decided to hire came to Joplin, we knew little about how experienced they were until we researched their work. They were able to build a relationship with a local architect, so we were able to have a built-in trusting relationship from the onset. We had the luxury of a team of architects from a much respected firm working on our project. As time passed, we developed a close working relationship with the architects and it proved to be

very conducive for us to work out our differences regarding design options; and, they helped us in our strategy to sell our bond issue to the public in order to fund the construction of our new school.

Our district hired a local construction company that had extensive experience in building schools. They had built relationships with local sub-contractors and were able to mobilize craftsmen in order to prioritize our project and complete the project in time. Their workmanship and reputation for building quality buildings was very important to the project as well. In the end, the temporary 90,000 square foot, temporary school was completed in less than 60 days, and we were able to start school on time. One year later, our “temporary school” was recognized by winning an international award for educational design from the architectural community.

Organizing the Academic and Athletics in Temporary Schools

One of the most important tasks was reorganizing the academic program and athletic programs for both schools. Because we had to use two different locations for the high school and a third location for the career center, we had to think very hard about coordinating schedules. We would be required to coordinate one master class schedule for three schools that were as far as 3 1/2 miles apart with many teachers traveling between schools. By creating a schedule for all three schools with a 15-minute differential in starting times, we were able to minimize traveling between schools for students and staff.

It was very obvious for us to put our 9th and 10th graders in the traditional school equipped with a gymnasium, band room, and all the amenities of a typical school. We were able to lease an abandoned box store at the local mall that would house the 11th and 12th graders, while the career center would be retrofitted into a warehouse in the middle of town. All 9th and 10th graders would spend their entire day at the traditional school campus; whereas, the 11th and 12th graders could start their day at the 9th and 10th grade campus in courses such as band, weight training, orchestra, or agriculture science. Buses would transport students from the 9th and 10th grade campus to the 11th and 12th grade campus as needed. In addition, students from the 11th and 12th grade campus would be bused to the career center both in the morning and afternoon.

Breaking the schedule down and reviewing courses very closely was important to ensure all of our students could access the entire curriculum as much as possible. We lost only about a half dozen courses that we previously offered because of low enrollment or excessive transportation needs. Saving the vast majority of our course offerings was a priority, and with some creative scheduling, we were able to do so.

For our athletic facilities, we took an inventory of all available options including city and college owned facilities. We quickly began negotiations with the city and local university, as well as local businesses, for the use of their facilities for practice and/or games. This process was complicated because many things needed to be considered. We also had to provide facilities for East Middle School athletes in addition to the Joplin High School athletes. Busing for students without transportation, and completing our regular schedule of games with opponents, was critical. Many hours of logistical planning sessions with the athletic director were critical for troubleshooting our options so our athletic program could survive. One thing we learned was our excellent relationship with city and university officials proved to be valuable, as they both made sacrifices in their programs as we negotiated agreements.

In the end, several teachers sacrificed their typical course load in order to make our academic program viable for the students with the least amount of disruption for the students. As a result, our students had few problems in making their course schedules work in order to meet

graduation requirements. Our coaches and sponsors were creative with their practice schedules and workouts, also. Everybody decided that we all needed to “pitch in” and “do the right thing” for the students in keeping the academic, athletic, and activities programs intact.

Learning for Students and Staff in our Post-Disaster Situation

One concern we had for our students was the daily routine of going to school and what learning would be like. It was decided that we would introduce laptops for the students and not replace our textbooks. The teachers had access to on-line textbooks in most cases while our college dual-credit and Advanced Placement courses required the use of traditional textbooks. This situation made planning for professional development very important with teacher input. The services of several learning coaches who specialized in teaching with digital sources were necessary and critical to our success. During the summer months we worked very hard with the faculty to plan a set of required activities for all staff to accomplish, and we planned for customized training for every faculty member regardless of their technological skill level.

Our staff spent a significant amount of time learning during the school year. As a result, our students had the opportunity to express their learning in many different formats including several inter-disciplinary activities and problem based learning projects. Our teachers had to be concerned with their own learning and presenting the material in different formats and re-designing lessons. It was critical that our staff use compassion, be consistent as much as possible, and allow for creativity.

As we thought about learning, it was important for us to consider almost every student as being at-risk. With so many students who had suffered trauma, school events such fire drills, tornado drills, or even unusual noises could easily cause the students anxiety. Learning is sometimes the last thing on a student’s mind in such a situation, therefore everyone’s ‘counseling skills’ were at a premium. Consistency was important for our students. Consistent classroom expectations, managerial activities, grading, and behavior expectations were all critical for our students. The fewer expectations the better would make a difference for our students.

Emphasis on creativity was a focus, also. First, being creative with the staff and sharing activities and resources was important. We used materials and resources that were offered to us. Our teachers revived their professional learning communities (PLC) groups and they built more trust than ever within their departments and with other teachers across the school. Our many years of working as functional PLC paid off when our teachers were asked to “step up” and lead each other in order to have a successful school year.

Planning for the Future

While we were planning special events, meeting media requests, planning for professional development, working with students and staff with PTSD, in addition to all of the other typical duties that we encounter during a school year, we also were very much involved with planning the design and program for the new high school. In addition, we had to be very targeted in our approach to gain the public’s trust so we could ask for a tax increase in order to build the school our district needed. Our high school and career center school staff spent several months planning for a new program as we looked at schools for building ideas.

We were able to have meetings with experts from schools and industry to help us plan a school for the future. In addition, we took several trips to schools that implemented innovative programs and designs in order to offer their students a unique and engaging program. We worked on the new school program first, and we made some basic decisions about how students

and teachers would interact before we made decisions on the physical plant design. The architectural firm we hired was very adept in 21st Century designs for schools and they were a good fit to work with us from a teaching and learning perspective.

Several trips and meetings devoted to programming highlighted much of the school year. We made decisions with significant input from stakeholders. We decided to offer a school program that would be centered on an extensive preparation for college and career readiness. For weeks and months the local media covered our meetings and followed our decision-making processes. As a result we were able to gain public support to pass a bond levy to build the high school, as well as all of the other schools needed in the district.

The bond issue campaign for a new high school and career center was an experience in itself. During the campaign we learned a history lesson from over 50 years ago. In the 1950s when our destroyed school was built, a second levy increase was necessary to raise money to furnish the building. We found by reviewing documents the students staged a walk out after they were not allowed to move into their new school on time, and they appealed to the public to finish the job. In addition, we found that on several other occasions students had participated in bond campaigns throughout Joplin's history.

As a result, our independent Vote Hope Campaign Committee enlisted the help of several students and made them visible and a part of the campaign. Our high school seniors registered to vote, and the Vote Hope Committee did a great job of addressing the community's questions with presentations, press releases, and by canvassing the neighborhoods. Finally, on the day of the vote we learned that we had won the bond levy election by a mere 47 votes. The price tag for the new schools was bigger than any other levy voted on in the district's history. We gained the public's trust and were able to start our project.

Making it Special

The importance of making each activity special was definitely a priority for the athletic department, as well as the high school administration. The first football game was identified early on as the biggest spectator event we would host until graduation day. In addition, the first day of school quickly began to be the kick-off of what would be one big event after another throughout the school year. We made the decision to hand out laptops on the first day of school and the Governor of Missouri attended our kick-off event. In addition, eighteen media trucks representing media outlets from all over the region and nation were present to cover our students coming back to school.

The first home football game was one of the first big community events after the storm. The planning behind the first home football game was extensive as we accounted for every minute before the kick-off and during halftime. The game actually resembled a college atmosphere and we almost doubled our normal crowd. It was critical to show our community that we were back - and stronger than ever. Extensive planning by the athletic department ensured the game was more festive than any other we had sponsored. It was a success as our school and community pride was showcased before, during, and after the game.

Another event that we took special care in planning was the farewell to Joplin High School before it was demolished. A few teachers came up with the idea after they reflected on the fact that many staff members were never able to enter the school after the storm to recover their belongings. Many of our teachers had spent all of their professional lives in the building. We decided to host a special event at the school, and we asked several staff members to speak about their memories of the school, stopping at different locations around the school as we walked the

perimeter. Then we took a picture of the entire staff by the iconic Hope High School sign. The picture was given to each staff member at Christmas as a memory from the school we lost.

There were so many activities throughout the year that took on a life of their own that it is difficult to list them all. The homecoming dance with David Cook from *American Idol*, the football game we played at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, and our prom. All of the events were highly scripted, planning was extensive, and the events were well publicized and covered by the media. And for the greatest student event of the year, and definitely the biggest, President Obama attended our graduation and spoke, as well as Governor Jay Nixon. It was critical to plan accordingly and try to keep the integrity of our graduation ceremony as much as possible. Both President Obama and Governor Nixon's advance teams wanted to help us keep our ceremony as normal as possible, while the media attendance and accommodations would be greatly enhanced.

Working on such an event took a team from the high school and central office. Making decisions about which VIPs would be invited, where they would sit, etc., and accommodate our graduates' families took a lot of work and problem solving skills. In the end, the ceremony was the work of many people who worked many hours to make sure the graduates had a graduation to remember. It was obviously an event that will always be remembered in our city, and all who were involved got to participate in an important part in the history of our community.

Finally, the last major activity in which we participated during the 2011-2012 school year was the groundbreaking ceremony at our new high school and technical center. The groundbreaking ceremony coincided with a city walk through the tornado zone. We worked with the city to help make "the walk" a community event. Schools, churches, and other landmarks in Joplin were all part of the event. The Joplin High School and Franklin Technology Center groundbreaking was held one year after the tragedy. Once again, extensive planning and public relations planning involved many people at the high school and career center. The event highlighted and capped one year of our school's attempt to "get it right" for the students and the community.

Paul Barr - Joplin Schools CFO

With the goals set by Dr. Huff, our superintendent, two days after the tornado, to open summer school on time in June with an extended session and the regular school session as pre-scheduled on August 17, our first step was to obtain Board of Education delegation of purchase approvals to Dr. Huff. This allowed for swift decision-making for significant purchases that impacted the opening of school. The Board met at least weekly during the summer of 2011, and the administrative leadership council met daily. This was helpful to ensure communication and cohesion as a group, as significant decisions were made swiftly in the early weeks of disaster recovery.

We recognized in the first week it was in our best interests to pursue third party services because of the scale of work and expertise required to successfully deal with the many Travelers Insurance claims and FEMA projects. We had providers on board within 10 days of the tornado (National Fire Adjustment, Inc. – public adjuster and Witt Associates – FEMA advisory services). The team assembled in the early days of recovery proved invaluable. We had started to rebuild East Middle School to meet the August 17 opening, with Travelers declaring it was a 75% loss, but not a total loss. Materials had been ordered for construction to repair the building. However, when we learned that FEMA would consider a 50% loss or more, a totaled project in which FEMA would participate in the costs above the insurance limit, it made more sense for us to stop the repair construction immediately in favor of a planning for a totally new replacement building. This early determination was pivotal in developing the future project at that site of a new middle school, newly acquired adjacent land, and campus design incorporating a new elementary school. These professional services provided two very important aspects of our recovery: 1) They performed the high volume of tasks and documentation needed to provide the basis of claims and 2) The industry expertise and prior experience with insurance and FEMA we needed to maximize our claims.

Also in the first weeks, to capture all new revenue and spending for the recovery for multiple accounting and third party needs, we quickly designed new account codes that applied to insurance, FEMA projects, donations and related activities for the recovery processes we anticipated. These groupings proved very helpful as we accounted for funds throughout the remainder of the temporary and permanent rebuilding projects and related operations in a high volume, quick turnaround transaction environment.

The Finance Department leadership and staff was very responsive to the challenges we faced. This required delegation of duties, some reassignment of positions, and tremendous effort and flexibility as a unit. One temporary staff position was added to assist with the increased volume of work. The challenges were met and exceeded as projects progressed, despite the fact the tornado impacted staff directly and indirectly. Like the school district at large, our staff was not immune from the many negative and stressful effects of the disaster. However, staff performed exceptionally when challenged. During the months that followed, we tried to recognize staff efforts and allow for the times to catch its collective breath. Counseling was provided to leadership and staff to assist in processing the disaster and the resulting suffering. We tried to lead by example, but deal with the mountain and complexities of the work in a respectful and empathetic manner in asking staff to rise to the challenges, which they did. The quality of staff in place and our cohesiveness as a unit prior to the tornado, were critical to our success in the following months.

Donations of money and goods flowed in the weeks that followed. Within the first thirty days, we formed a donations receipt and acknowledgement strategy that included the Joplin Schools Foundation. All donations were tracked and acknowledgements were sent to donors. Donations with designations were honored. Transparency builds trust. The generosity of the public, including donated labor and prayers of support, provided much needed help and hope to victims and to us as enablers.

The amount of work we had to do required keen focus on what was possible, while setting aside what seemed improbable. We set spending priorities and processes to meet the time demands and deadlines we faced. The budget was adjusted as spending dictated, with the singular goal of equipping schools and supplying teachers and students with the tools needed for a successful learning experience. We used “insurance totaled” equipment to the extent possible to keep from expending funds for temporary school and ongoing administrative operations. Purchases were made with the idea that as many of the items purchased as possible could be used after schools and operations returned to permanent locations, inside the insurance and FEMA claim rules.

In the first three weeks of the disaster, while focused intently on school opening August 17, we began planning for rebuilding efforts initially focused on locations. An informal survey was conducted of the community which indicated a strong preference to keep the destroyed high school and technology center at the current location, in the center of the community on one campus. We immediately devised a plan to expand our current footprint from thirty-eight acres to a larger number in order to better accommodate a 21st Century education facility. This led to the mailing on June 29 of the first set of letters (sixty-nine) to neighboring property owners broaching the subject of potential property purchases, written in an empathic, respectful manner. Eventually, we were able to execute seventy-five contracts for eighty lots, which expanded the footprint to sixty-six acres. Simultaneously, we reached out to St. John’s Hospital and inquired about its site rebuilding plans. We learned immediately that St. John’s was considering a move from the present site and would consider our interest in a parcel of property for our rebuilding of Irving Elementary School. Also by early July, a property owner contacted us near the East Middle School site offering to sell property. This led to a similar property acquisition effort at that site which expanded the rebuilding footprint from twenty acres to thirty-five acres.

Within eight weeks of the tornado, the administration also submitted a request of FEMA for area community safe rooms. This was eventually approved and provided a cornerstone of our rebuilding plan. The local match required for the grants were part of the basis of the narrow pass of the bond issue. These safe rooms will provide shelter on a voluntary basis to the public for decades to come.

These are four examples of how timing and opportunity-recognition are critical even during the initial days of disaster recovery. Had these efforts not taken place in those early days but instead weeks later, the eventual developments would not have happened to the extent they did or not at all...thus, resulting in opportunities lost with major impact to Joplin Schools and our community for the next seventy-five plus years. The lesson learned – commit to overcome immediate disaster challenges, but not at the expense of opportunity. The broad, long view must always be maintained to be successful.

Some of our key operating principles were:

1. Transparency builds trust
2. Tell our story before the media does

3. The Board and leadership need to be lock-step, trusting, and consistent in messaging
4. Recognition that public goodwill accrued to date must be relied on to a significant degree for leadership to make the swift, insightful and comprehensive decisions needed to successfully guide Joplin Schools through the challenges presented by the disaster.

As we turned the corner and celebrated our school opening date of August 17, we focused our attention on developing a permanent rebuilding plan. Finances available posed the initial challenge as insurance proceeds, donations and FEMA assistance were projected and tallied. Building project estimates were developed. We could see a gap in funding of sixty-two million dollars. Why this much? We explained to our public that replacement insurance and FEMA will build back only what was lost with code upgrades. However, to expand spaces to meet 21st Century instructional needs the buildings should be designed accordingly. In addition, the rebuilds needed to be flexible and sustainable relative to the operating budget and future labor costs. Energy efficient equipment and design was also anticipated. A number of these features, while financially justifiable over time, required an upfront investment to produce future savings. This information formed the basis of an eventual bond issue grassroots campaign that led to a narrow pass in the April 2012 vote. To ask our public to raise the debt service tax levy to pay off twenty year bonds (sixty-two million dollars) was not without serious debate and consternation. We knew that was a lot to ask of a public victimized by such a severe disaster. However, we saw this as an opportunity to achieve a plan in one vote, at one time. This was achieved by many pulling on the rope together, in the same direction as one community. Once again, opportunity knocked, we planned the work, and with the “yes” vote we worked the plan. Besides setting the schools on a positive rebuilding track for future generations, the bond passage was one of the first community-wide points of inspiration and hope to kick start the area recovery.

Lessons learned throughout the recovery process:

1. Keep your insurance policy current. Include items on the grounds – playground equipment, parking lot lights, sheds, storage units, etc. Certain special purpose building units may not be paid for in the typical manner, which then get inadvertently excluded in covered inventory. Structures and equipment that are donated, collaboratively funded, purchased by a benefactor (PTA, booster group, etc.), need to be added to your insurance policy as you are the owner.
2. Extra expense coverage (similar to business interruption coverage) needs to be covered at a sufficient level to help fund temporary operations. For a school district of 7500 students, I’ve been advised coverage of \$3 - \$5 million should be considered.
3. Blanket coverage limits for one event provide flexibility vs. having individual building limits that if not kept current at the individual level, could create a funding shortage for replacement of any one structure. The blanket coverage would preclude that scenario.
4. A single building loss due to fire or explosion, is more probable than losing forty percent of all buildings from a major tornado, flood or earthquake. A one building loss is not likely to qualify for FEMA assistance. Therefore, a contingency plan needs to be developed to attain space and provide sufficient funding for a key single building loss, temporary operation site, and permanent replacement site based on insurance and local funding only for short term and multi-year possibilities. Contingency plans should consider the most likely scenarios first, and follow with those that have decreasing probabilities.

5. One point regarding insurance can't be stressed enough relating to the importance of the insurance carrier selected for property coverage. The test of your carrier is not known until you file a large and/or complicated claim. Therefore, only property insurance carriers that have the highest rated claims payment services and financial strength should be engaged. These requirements should be included in your Request for Bids and made available to the marketplace on an evenhanded basis, allowing all to participate. The pressures you may receive to place local or political interests ahead of the highest standard you can set with the bid, should be set aside while you proceed undeterred. The perceived benefit brought by these pressures including a dollar savings amount at bid opening over a more qualified competitor, whether real or unreal, will long be forgotten and unappreciated if you select a carrier that is less than the best and have to face a property disaster of one or more buildings with this pre-selected business partner you are so dependent for a successful recovery.

Throughout our time in dealing with the disaster, we maintained a focused, disciplined attitude toward the tasks at hand. Little time or effort was expended on issues that in normal times, could dominate discussions or be considered small impact preferential aspects in trying to attain the best outcome in a collaborative fashion. Time didn't allow that luxury. Distraction was not tolerated. Our experiences, knowledge, and best judgments toward outcomes were the attributes guiding decision-making. Trust was given and assumed throughout all levels, between departments and civic organizations. This approach provided the foundation to navigate the tumultuous waters of recovery in the public eye with effectiveness and integrity.

Nila Vance - Principal of Irving Elementary School

The May 2011 tornado not only hit my home but also my school. Neither building was completely destroyed but both were heavily damaged. My school was built in 1920's so the damage to the school was so significant that the district decided to build a new school instead of repairing it.

The storm not only took the school but it also completely destroyed the majority of my students' and teachers' homes and took the life of one of our students. With so much tragedy and sadness in a small school of 250, the biggest lesson I learned was the sense of community. We go through life without much thought.

Lesson One - it was vitally important to look for opportunities to listen.

- Listen to the staff about their tragedy. Most teachers are leaders and like to plan. The tornado took all of our control and planning away. A hug and a mutual cry can go a long way to a hurting community. You may not be able to change the circumstances and make a plan you can perfectly execute (like teachers love to do!) but you can talk about accepting the new normal. Help staff know it is okay to break down and cry. It is okay if your day doesn't go perfectly planned.
- Listen to the parents and don't be afraid to reach out. The hardest thing I had to do after the tornado was contact the mother of the student we lost. But talking to her and sharing stories about him brought some healing. I still contact that parent every once in a while to check up. Never be afraid to ask the tough question of how the family is doing. Also small things matter! Find opportunities to remember their child with them. They want to know that their son or daughter left an impact on the community. I remember his mom came to the school and the first thing she wanted to see was the storm shelters so she knew the other kids were safe. After hearing parents' worries about future storms, we had an open house where we had parents visit the storm shelters. It is important that parents know you have a plan.
- Listen to the students. Just like staff and parents, not talking about the tornado didn't work. Let students talk about the storm. Art Feeds came and did projects that allowed students to express and talk about the storm in a constructive manner. The counselor did lessons on how to deal with fear. Writing was a wonderful outlet for our students to express themselves.

Lesson Two - be aware for opportunities to give back.

- The staff found that the best way to handle stress is to give back. It made them feel good to give back to their community, students and fellow staff members. Two years after the tornado I still have staff and students out of their homes. It is important to look for opportunities to show service to others. The service can be through an organization like Habitat for Humanity or it can be the little things. It can be as simple as covering a classroom or recess duty when you notice a teacher is having a rough day with her contractor or raising money for a sick student or staff member. Involve parents in the giving back too! Some of our parents worked on a Habitat House for an Emerson Family. Remember no matter how bad it seems, there is always someone out there that is having a rougher time.

- I recently lost a staff member to cancer and she had quote she used to always use. The quote is perfect for anyone going through a rough time. "Don't wait for the storm to pass, learn to dance in the rain".

We need to take time to count our blessings even in the midst of a tragedy. We have a lot of blessings from the 2011 Tornado.

- It happened on a Sunday
- We only lost one student at Emerson. Although his life was precious and he was an amazing boy, my school could have lost so many more when you look at the devastation of the area.
- We are getting a brand new school! My student body is 90% poverty. Most of the students have never had the opportunity to be in any kind of State of the Art Building.
- We were shown unconditional love by the world in so many ways. From a North Dakota Middle School that brought us Santa delivering gifts, to a St. Louis Church that painted us beautiful murals, to a Kansas City Group that hand crafted and painted us bookshelves for each classroom to many, many more.
- Our city is building back stronger and prettier.

Dave Rockers - Director Franklin Technology Center

Hindsight is 20/20 so they say, and at the time of the tornado decisions just had to be made. We had so many things coming at us, you just had to use your best judgments, make decisions and move on to the next one. Nothing prepares you for something like this, you just do the best you can with the scenario you are given. Looking back on what we did, I can think of things that I believe were key to us being able to begin school on August 17, 2011.

I think in preparation for potential disasters, it is a good practice to have an emergency staff contact list. Our school e-mail went down so we took time putting together a list of home email addresses and cell phones that we did not have before the incident. We were fortunate that I maintain my office in two locations, so we had another place to operate from with internet access, etc. I think having an alternate meeting place in the wake of a disaster in advance would be helpful.

Our staff was key in getting us back up and running. One of our instructors contacted me and said what can we do? Can we set up a command post and start contacting folks to help with donations? We were able to do that within a few days after the tornado. Contacts that our instructors had pre-tornado and contacts that we had as a school were instrumental in gaining donations of equipment, books, supplies, etc. so that we were equipped to have school again.

Two key things our Central Office Administrators did that contributed heavily to our rebuilding success were:

1. The district was able to get the Governor to waive the normal bid process for school building projects. We were able to deal with architectural firms who hired contractors that could immediately begin the temporary rebuilding school sites. This allowed very fast action.
2. The district chose our temporary building location on Memorial Day, one week after the tornado. The massive damage throughout Joplin made property a premium. Finding a 50,000 square foot building in which to temporarily locate our facility had to be done quickly. By the first Monday in June our temporary building had metal stud walls being constructed for a facility in which we now house 12 Technical programs.

The district also got involved with a program called Adopt a Classroom. Many of our teachers and programs received assistance through this program which funds “mini-grants” for education. In one example, the Ritz-Carlton adopted our Culinary Arts program and provided tool kits for the students. This is just one in many examples of partnerships that occurred as a result of the Adopt a Classroom program.

Through the National Skills USA conference in Kansas City, I was able to meet with representatives from Lowe's and a drive sponsored by Lowe's with many tool vendors present at the National Skills contest resulted in 8 pallets of portable and hand tools being delivered to our temporary campus. Many other contacts were made at National Skills USA, including contact with the ICAR foundation for Collision Repair. Through that foundation thousands of dollars were generated for our Auto Collision program. This was assisted by a video produced by State Farm Insurance and posted on the Tech Talk website.

Contacts through an area school list serve also resulted in equipment being loaned or donated for various programs including: Culinary Arts, Automotive Technology, Collision Repair, Construction Technology, Engineering Design, Computer Networking and Maintenance, Health

Sciences, Diversified Health Occupations, and Certified Nurse Assistant. Programs at two other locations included Agriculture Education, Technology Education, and various Business and Marketing programs. Area colleges contributed through curriculum resources and equipment, various entities such as Missouri Farm Bureau helped with equipment and cash donations. The networking, pre-tornado was a key to our success in obtaining support and help post-tornado.

We were able to quickly determine what programs needed to be located at the temporary FTC site or could be included at the two high school sites. Once this was determined, in a matter of a very short meeting, a temporary layout for our temporary facility was put on paper. Meetings happened very quickly with contractors, sub-contractors, insurance, FEMA and Corp of Engineers personnel. Some programs such as Agricultural Education with a fully operational Greenhouse and Classroom/Lab had to be put in modular facilities which were built by the Corp of Engineers.

I met daily with the Project Supervisor for construction of our temporary facility and was on call throughout the project. The contractors worked around the clock and weekends in order to complete the building projects in time for school to begin on August 17th.

Bud Sexson - Principal of East Middle School

The lesson I learned, and continue to learn, regarding recovering from such community wide-devastation, is that **you can trust in the kindness of others**. We were knocked down to our knees and people came to give us help to stand. It was people from outside our community and people from within too. The human spirit is so strong.

Also, I learned **the value of leadership**. I have been a principal for many years and when our superintendent courageously stated "we will begin school on August 17", well that was one of the most motivating things we could hear. His confidence was contagious.

Finally, if any community goes through something of this nature, make recovery plans, plan to rebuild and be better. **Become what you were dreaming to become**. You can do this because of the tremendous strength that is mustered in the recovery process.

Healthcare



Gary Pulsipher - CEO Mercy Hospital

I'm the administrator of Mercy Hospital Joplin, the hospital formerly known as St. John's Regional Medical Center in Joplin Missouri. This is the hospital that was totally destroyed in a devastating EF5 tornado the evening of May 22, 2011.

Thankfully, your odds of experiencing such a storm are remote. But with that said, I wanted to share two distinct thoughts with regard to our rebuilding, and how I might do things differently in the face of such a challenge.

Backdrop

Some of my most distinct memories from the earliest hours after the storm were the feelings of desperation. I was overwhelmed by the desire for the welfare of the patients we cared for, as well as for the many co-workers across Mercy. At the same time, my mind was swirling when thinking about all the work that had to be done and where to start.

Getting Help

I have always had an appreciation for the work of others and known that I was a very small part of any progress or success of the organizations I have worked for. However, in the challenge of the tornado, being able to rely on incredible co-workers and a host of others from around the country became the ray of hope that we would be OK.

That night, as I arrived at the hospital approximately 20 minutes after the tornado, there were already a number of co-workers taking their posts in our often-practiced emergency preparedness drills. And in some cases, these co-workers came even though they didn't know about the well-being of their own families.

Further, there were also many community members who arrived at the hospital to help in any way they could. They were the ones we called on to help evacuate the many patients and show others to safety. I was amazed by their incredibly giving spirits.

There were few, and I would say very few, who came to take advantage of the situation. I remember a couple of strong young men who offered that they were there to assist. We later found them trying to take the ATM out of the lobby! But nonetheless, the detractors were few, and the help and support from others was overwhelming and so appreciated.

As the weeks and days rolled by, there were also experts in so many areas who came forward to offer counsel and guidance in our efforts to rebuild. We were blessed by so many and especially by the expertise they brought.

At Mercy, we are fortunate to be part of a larger health system with approximately 38,000 co-workers. Our leaders quickly stepped-in and helped us organize the work of rebuilding. What a relief and support that was to us in Joplin. The work was quickly organized into 17 different critical work areas ranging from finding all the patients in the hospital and co-workers, to dealing with the insurance companies and rebuilding. And – while they helped us organize, they were careful not to take over, but left us in charge of all aspects of the work.

As you face challenges in the future, quickly realize how important the people are who work with and around you every day, and rely upon them to give the help they are prepared to give, and miracles can and will happen. While most of us are inherently independent, in a crisis, relying on others is a vital part of the restoration process.

Evaluating Options

I mentioned earlier that the hospital was destroyed, but also destroyed in the storm were the many physician offices for physicians employed by the hospital, as well as buildings housing other critical services and programs. A major challenge that we faced very early was the need to find a places to do business, and for us, that challenge felt very urgent.

Further, because so many other businesses and institutions were also destroyed, a land-rush of sorts developed, with many of us looking for the few places that were vacant and undamaged in the community to set-up business.

In our case, we weren't able to find a single facility that would meet all our needs, but ended up renting multiple buildings and locations. We were grateful to find places to get back to work, but in some cases, we regret that we entered into agreements that in retrospect we wish we would have evaluated more closely.

For example, the night of the storm we moved our emergency room staff and physicians to Memorial Hall, a concert/event facility owned by the City of Joplin. We used this facility fully for a good six weeks, without having to reimburse the City. Many of our physicians and others worked at local schools in the triage centers that were established to take care of victims of the tornado.

On a parallel path, within one week, we had procured and set-up (with the help of National Guard personnel), a Field Hospital. This 'MASH-type' hospital was a specially designed tent facility with approximately 50 total beds (25 for inpatients and 25 for the emergency department). We used this facility for approximately 5 months, when we moved into a 'modular' facility. That facility served for another 8 months until we could construct a 'component' hospital that will serve us well until the replacement hospital is complete in early 2015.

These temporary facilities served us very well and allowed to get back to treating patients in a hospital setting, albeit different than we had ever used before. I don't believe we could have found better options for the hospital. These facilities were however expensive and brought many challenges.

In addition to these hospital facilities, we quickly worked to replace physician clinic space as well as office spaces for the many co-workers in the region. To accommodate these needs, we signed leases on both permanent buildings as well as temporary modular facilities to meet the needs. These were leased for periods of between 3 years and in one case 10 years.

All of these facilities and arrangements have allowed us to get back to business quickly and preserve an important workforce. However, in all our haste to get back on-line, we made some costly mistakes.

My caution here; don't feel unnecessary pressure to make quick decisions that end up costing your organization. In at least 2 or 3 cases, we could have met our needs with much lower cost.

For us, this was a significant learning experience. All of us at Mercy Hospital Joplin are looking forward to a tremendous future with new facilities in which to work. The tornado, with all its devastation and challenges, will also bring tremendous blessings to our community and region. The two quick points I mention above are only a small part of our experience.

Paula Baker - CEO Freeman Hospital

Even now—years after the storm—when the debris is gone and the rebuilding is underway, my mind can easily go back to that night. My frantic drive to Freeman Hospital West. The sheer volume of patients. The look of shock on their faces. The blood. The quietness despite so many people injured so severely. Just hours before, our community had been moving about at its normal Sunday pace. Families were still intact. Eight thousand homes stood soundly. Businesses greeted their patrons. At Freeman, physicians and nurses tended to the ill and injured, unaware of the masses that would soon arrive on our doorstep.

Like every household and business in Joplin, Freeman has its own story to tell surrounding the events of May 22, 2011. At the time the tornado struck, 259 of the 288 beds at Freeman Hospital West were full. Our ER was near capacity with 38 of its 41 beds full. The storm had not yet finished tearing its way through Joplin when the first victim was wheeled into our ER. Seeing the gruesome nature of this young man's wounds, one of our nurses asked him what had caused such severe lacerations. "It's the tornado," he told her. "It destroyed everything."

From that moment on, patients arrived in droves—wave after wave after wave. In those first hours, 750 patients filled our 41-bed ER. Their injuries mirrored those inflicted during war—head traumas, severed limbs, objects impaled into their bodies.

One-hundred ten physicians and 883 employees reported to duty that evening. Some of them shook off the debris of their homes and made their way to Freeman. Some of them maneuvered across downed power lines, through streets they traveled daily but did not recognize, helping those in need along the way. Some of them worked knowing their families were in the path of the storm, not sure if their father, mother, siblings, spouse, or children were alive.

They focused on the task at hand, because before them lay 750 souls in need of care.

To tell Freeman's story of May 22, 2011, is to tell a tale of heroes—ordinary people doing extraordinary deeds. The Freeman housekeeper who gave her shoes to a patient who had none. The ER unit secretary who raced to her home to dig her daughter out from the rubble, and then returned to work. The nurse who cared for 46 patients at Freeman Hospital East until an ambulance arrived five hours later. Much can be learned from what Freeman experienced that night. These are the lessons we found to be most valuable.

Lesson #1: Drill until you fail. Then drill again.

Disasters don't provide warning. You cannot anticipate their magnitude. As a health system, our level of advance emergency preparedness is critical. Lives depend on it. So, we train and we drill often throughout the year. In fact, two days before the storm struck, Freeman wrapped up a week-long drill, during which we walked through the motions of responding to a catastrophic earthquake that leveled much of the region. Little did we know how essential those skills would be.

During a disaster, a flood of issues will come at you simultaneously: roads will be inaccessible, phones will be useless, gas lines will be severed, supplies will be limited; staff may lose their homes or—worse yet—their lives. The one certainty in a disaster is that emergencies will arise. There will be breakdowns along the way. But drilling will help ensure that a good foundation has been laid so an organization can most effectively respond to a disaster.

Freeman's foundation was vital on that May evening and in the days to follow. The health system has an active Emergency Preparedness Committee comprised of cross-functional team members who meet monthly. Several key staff are also members of the local Emergency Planning Committee. Additionally, Freeman Health System works with a regional healthcare coalition guided by Missouri Hospital Association (MHA). In fact, our relationship with MHA and other regional partners was a saving grace during the tornado. Following the storm, one of the most severe issues we faced was a lack of water pressure, which prohibited us from, among other things, sterilizing instruments, offering dialysis, and even flushing toilets. MHA escalated our water issue with Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, enabling us to get critical services back on line as quickly as possible.

I encourage you to examine your plan. Does it take into consideration the potential of a long term event? Do you have relationships established that would allow you to seek help from other organizations in the midst of a disaster? Are you prepared to operate with only the basics for multiple days?

Lesson #2: Expect the unexpected.

Our supplies diminished at an alarming rate. The 96 hour par levels we established lasted about 4 hours. On any other day, matching patient records, such as radiology reports, to the appropriate patient is an easy task. On the evening of the storm, it was incredibly difficult. Even if we weren't on emergency power and operating under the worst conditions possible, the sheer volume of wounded individuals hampered our efforts. We never expected to conduct hundreds upon hundreds of radiology and lab procedures.

We also never expected to lose communication to the extent that we did. The tornado destroyed phone towers and power lines, leaving land lines, cell phones, and even the internet largely inaccessible; we were left largely unconnected to the outside world. What had just hours before been considered antiquated forms of communication—ham radios and hand-held radios—became our lifeline.

Lesson #3: The ripple effect

Nine months after the tornado, the combined average daily patient census at Freeman Hospital West and Freeman Hospital East reached a record-breaking level, surpassing even that of June 2011, one month after the tornado. With the destruction of St. John's Regional Medical Center and so many physician offices, the landscape of healthcare in Joplin changed dramatically overnight. As a result, two entire floors at Freeman Hospital West—previously left unfinished for future expansion—were completed, adding 58 greatly needed patient beds. It took an entire year for Freeman Urgent Care patient census to return to normal post-tornado. Freeman Marketing Department fielded tornado-related calls well after the one-year anniversary of the storm.

Don't expect life to resume to normal within a matter of days or weeks. Unanticipated issues and changes will occur. You may still feel the aftereffects of a disaster years later.

Lesson #4: Employees are your greatest asset. Take care of them.

The types of injuries caused by the tornado were not new to our clinical staff. What they had not yet experienced was the sheer volume of patients with these injuries. In a matter of hours, our hallways, lobbies, and patient rooms were filled with hundreds upon hundreds of patients. It truly was the stuff of nightmares—an event even our most seasoned staff had difficulty dealing with. Knowing this, within 48 hours of the storm, our behavioral health division began

providing 24-hour on-site counseling to staff and volunteers. Support groups also began meeting for the year that followed.

Nearly 400 employees were impacted by the storm to varying degrees. Some lost their homes and vehicles. Others lost loved ones. Two Freeman employees were killed during the tornado. The storm knocked our community to its knees and among the devastated were Freeman employees. Freeman leaders felt strongly that something had to be done to aid our employees. In addition to receiving assistance from the Freeman Employee Disaster Relief Funds, a fully functioning relief distribution center, comprised entirely from donated items, was established within 36 hours. Through that effort, we distributed personal necessities, cleaning supplies, tools, over-the-counter medications, diapers, formula; toys, 40 beds, 30,000 bottles of water, 4,000 pounds of food, 300 pair of shoes, and 50 car seats.

Lesson #5: Dedication is a trait that cannot be taught.

There is only one force strong enough to compel hundreds of individuals to report to work in the midst of a disaster. Only one force can drive a person whose home has just been destroyed by an EF-5 tornado to leave the rubble and report for duty. Only one thing can propel a person onward, traveling over downed power lines and other unknown dangers. As supplies wane and disappear, as the injured arrive on doors and in the backs of pick-up trucks, as the shock of what just befell our community settles in, only one force can compel a person to persist.

That force is dedication.

Dedication is instilled in everyone who whose heart lies in the field of healthcare. The desire to help others is why we chose our profession. Though this is something long known to us, the events of May 22, 2011, reinforced the notion. Freeman's response would not have been what it was without the hearts and hands of our employees. They worked for hours—or days—on end, unwavering in their commitment. They are selfless individuals. They are heroes. That kind of dedication is something that simply cannot be taught. It must be engrained into one's heart. It must be a defining characteristic of a person's character. At Freeman such dedication is abundant.

Dottie Bringle - Former COO, Mercy (St. Johns) Hospital

Disaster Management

St. John's had always been very involved in disaster management. Several drills were done per year and participation in these drills was not optional. When a drill is called it is expected that protocols for that specific disaster are implemented. All areas of the hospital had access to the disaster plan both electronically and in hard copy format. Administrators are also expected to participate; incident command is established immediately and management are expected to move into the areas of the hospital to ensure staff are participating. St. John's had, during 2011, actually participated and coordinated efforts with the City of Joplin, Jasper County, the Emergency Healthcare Coalition, Region D and the State of Missouri. Even though our plan was considered to be comprehensive it did not go far enough as we never planned for total destruction.

Our Story

There were 183 in-patients and 25 ED patients in the building at the time the tornado struck. The hospital was destroyed and not safe. Evacuation was the only option. The staff immediately began doing what they were trained to do and in 90 minutes they had the entire hospital evacuated. Ambulatory patients walked. Other patients were carried on back boards, doors, mattresses and other evacuation devices down the stairwells of the nine story building. Critical patients were loaded into pickup trucks and other private vehicles to be transported to Freeman Hospital which was about 6 blocks away. The less critical patients were taken to our rehab hospital which was severely damaged but was the only building on our 50+ acre campus that was not totally destroyed and had limited generator power.

After digging themselves out of the rubble, the hospital staff had no idea the entire hospital was mortally wounded. People from the community were flooding into the hospital as it was the only building that remained standing for many blocks around. Staff cared for patients in the parking lots, amidst all the twisted metal of vehicles, our BK-117 helicopter, and a sea of disoriented people and small animals. Many continued to go back into the building to get patients out, even when the fire department said there was smoke coming from the building.

Communication was our biggest dilemma. If it was not for texting it would have been nearly impossible to communicate with each other. Telephone lines were down and radio lines were to be used for emergency traffic only. It has been estimated that nearly 1500 people were treated in the first 24 hours. Typical injuries were degloving injuries, objects impaled into people, many lacerations and many broken bones. Pain medications and oxygen were extremely limited.

Realistic Manpower Allocation

When disaster strikes it can be fast, furious, without notice and crippling. The type of disaster and extent of destruction will determine your most immediate needs. When the weather station began releasing footage, which was almost immediately, volunteers in areas of the community not affected began to show up. Do not underestimate the manpower requirements and do not underestimate the value of volunteers. If you do not assign people to a task they will search for ways to assist on their own.

In the first few hours, we needed personnel to manage the triage sites. It required both staff and volunteers to evacuate. We also needed pharmacists to manage the drug inventory and supplies coordinators. Security personnel were essential as were logistics persons to help identify where

patients were transferred. Runners and people to communicate are essential if you have no working communication devices.

After first 24-48 hours other manpower needs became critical. Examples of these are:

1. Food services for staff and workers
2. Facilities coordination (lighting, security and/or national guard to secure site, buildings, generator needs (large and small), hand washing stations, portable toilets, transportation vehicles, tents for meetings/gatherings, shower and laundry capability
3. Supply chain—secure needed equipment and supplies for immediate patient care as well as for new field hospital
4. Warehousing needs
5. Badging, credentialing and tracking
6. Biomedical technicians to ensure equipment is safe for use
7. Persons to deal with government and regulatory agencies
8. Volunteer coordinator—volunteers from outside of your community will come in large numbers.
9. Coordinator to manage donations both internally and to other locations throughout the city
10. Counselors and social workers
11. Persons to deal with vendors, negotiate cost for equipment and other needs. Recommend this person be away from site but connected to the person in charge at the site.
12. Representative at the local Emergency Planning agency to act as a liaison.
Communication initially with governing agencies is critical.

Incident command should be set up away from disaster site. A strong incident commander is a must as well as the following people:

1. Finance
2. Clinical
3. Infection Control
4. Secretarial support
5. Logistics
6. Public Relations
7. Human Resources
8. Information Technology
9. PBX operators (2500 calls within first 24 hours)
10. Persons to attend FEMA and City/State meetings to ensure your organization is well represented.

Interacting with the Agencies: Pre/During/Post Disaster

It is imperative that staff go through the drills and know their emergency procedures so they can act intuitively in the time of a disaster - large or small and with or without their emergency manual/protocols to assist them. It is important that if you do not have the back up of a large health system you clearly need to understand who your resources are from a local, state and federal perspective.

1. City Management (DOH/City Manager/Emergency Coordinator) - Know the people you will be working with in local and city government. Have their contact information in your computer as well as your cell phone.
2. Missouri D-MAT - Identify the Commander as well as the Chief Medical Officer. They were of great value in moving forward and offered “pearls of wisdom” on how to interact with other agencies.
3. National Guard - The guard assisted in the construction of the mobile medical unit or field hospital. They also provided great assistance in securing property and curbing vandalism.
4. Missouri Hospital Association/Mo-DHHS/Governor’s Office - Utilize your state hospital association to assist with needed resources whether it is equipment, staff or processing. They are of great help in obtaining waivers, provision of resources to identify areas of needed assistance. The Governor’s office sent resources to our community to identify specific needs where the governor could help
5. SEMA/FEMA - It is important to immediately connect with the SEMA/FEMA representative that will be assigned to your facility. If you are unfamiliar with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, it is important for someone to have access to it. I would recommend hiring an agency to assist with coordination of FEMA process. Following the FEMA guidelines carefully will place your organization at *less risk* of losing any potential funding.
6. US Army Corps of Engineers - Discussions with the corps took place almost immediately. They will work hand in hand with FEMA and meetings will be smoother and quicker if both of these agencies are in the same room at the same time.
7. Law Enforcement - Local law enforcement played a significant role in assisting to secure our buildings and premises. Many agencies were deployed to our community.
8. Federal Agencies - The Department of Health & Human Services, Homeland Security, local, state and federal legislators as well as the President of the United States came to Joplin. It was important to have a delegation of people available who can assist in telling your own story as well as participate in assisting to communicate your specific needs. When someone offers a card or contact information, in case they can help, take this information readily. You will likely need it at a later date.
9. Joint Commission/CMS - Both agencies came to visit our temporary facilities. They were helpful and offered good advice to help ensure safety measures were in place.

Lastly, it is important to continue to communicate and interact with these agencies on an on-going basis. Conversations should occur with specified individuals to ensure continuity and consistency in messaging as well as to ensure all necessary steps are taking place as you move forward. Do not take for granted the resources that are available. It is better to prepare in advance than to wait until there is an actual disaster.

Vicki Mieseler – Vice President of Clinical Services, Ozark Center for Mental Health

Our mental health system was battered and bruised with the loss of 8 of 14 Ozark Center facilities and 40 inpatient psychiatric beds. As we have learned, disaster results can't be measured solely by data, the night of May 22, 2011 resulted in destruction that left our community in a state of shock and disbelief and our residents deeply affected by trauma and saddened with grief and loss. The mental health needs of this community were a high priority in immediate and long-term disaster response planning and the primary focus of Joplin's community mental health center, Ozark Center.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health began working with Ozark Center within a few hours of the tornado offering us a team specifically assigned to Ozark Center for the next 18 months. This team and their expertise would serve as a panel of guidance and support that provided the foundation for our disaster response and the recovery of the City of Joplin. That team would provide the resources and support for numerous grants including the FEMA CCP program, the SAMHSA Emergency Response Grant, a two million dollar award from the Governor's office to develop a Center of Excellence on child trauma and the SOAR team, a school based 10 person team that worked in the Joplin School System for the first year following the tornado. The largest and most well-known of these efforts was the *Healing Joplin* team.

Imagine managing significant business loss, your staff, 100% of whom were disaster survivors, your existing consumers, also survivors, whom you couldn't effectively communicate with, and the community at large whose needs immediately and well in to the future were like nothing you've ever managed before. The answer came to us from our Department of Mental Health team. They strongly recommended we apply for the FEMA crisis counseling program grant and they informed us we needed to apply immediately. The only thing we knew about the crisis counseling program model was that it involved hiring a very large team of paraprofessionals that were to provide Psychological First Aid in our community. As licensed mental health professionals we were reluctant to say the least. Our thoughts were focused on hiring other licensed mental health professionals and gearing up for the onslaught of phone calls for therapy. But we reflected on our previous disaster experiences which paled in comparison to our current situation because they involved redirecting existing licensed staff to provide crisis management stress debriefing and therapy on a small scale and we were still responsible for more than 13,000 consumers. After considering our past and reading reports on lessons learned from 911 and Hurricane Katrina, and processing the information our Department of Mental Health Team was providing, we decided to apply for the FEMA crisis counseling program grant. We were very concerned about the lack of funding available for traditional services. However, given the extent of the disaster in Joplin, we were willing to pursue anything that would help heal our community. The initial plan was to go ahead with the crisis counseling program model as one piece of our disaster response and seek out other revenue sources to pay for what we felt, at that time, was the primary need – traditional services.

What we learned over the next fifteen months was that the FEMA crisis counseling program model de-emphasizes the mental health feel of counseling. Sessions are less formal, less structured and less clinical in design. The model acknowledges the importance of critical incident stress management and other techniques for reducing the likelihood of stress related illnesses and is intended to follow and complement traditional therapy services.

The model emphasizes supportive listening, problem solving, education about disaster stress, coping skills, and public information, as well as assessment and referral when appropriate. The model recommends trained paraprofessionals as the primary responders and frankly paraprofessionals were easier to hire quickly. Ozark Center used people indigenous to our area and survivors of the storm to further emphasize the development of rapport and relationship building which is critical to the success of the crisis counseling program.

The role of these paraprofessional counselors involved assisting survivors in identifying and acknowledging that dealing with new and complex organizations can be difficult and very stressful; assisting in normalizing the disaster experience; assisting survivors in organizing and prioritizing recovery tasks and external demands; establishing and maintaining current information about a wide variety of recovery resources; helping survivors obtain or maximize skills that will enable them to work effectively with recovery organizations; and lastly, represent the mental health perspective on community-based committees to continue to address unmet needs.

The emphasis is placed on outreach – going to the homes, sites, and shelters where people are.... not waiting for them to come to the mental health center – and going as quickly as possible after the disaster occurs.

Our 70 person crisis counseling program team provided not only psychological first aid but also crisis counseling, group education events, community outreach and educational training. We named our team “*Healing Joplin*”. Our *Healing Joplin* team provided the city with compassionate support and a presence allowing survivors to tell their story while normalizing their feelings and experiences. Our team assisted in educating and clarifying what happened, reframing the disaster, educating people about what to expect and assistance with reconnecting. Our *Healing Joplin* team encouraged connection with available resources, assisted with problem solving and developing plans of action, all the while building individual and community resilience. Our team empowered survivors to move forward by building a legacy of knowledge and skills that can be used for a life time.

Our *Healing Joplin* team hosted numerous support groups and public educational events, regular and ongoing resource table placement within the community at which disaster survivors could talk to a team member, obtain resources or a referral to services to meet unmet needs. Our team participated in parades, community events, memorial events, business re-openings, and provided a presence at shelters, volunteer food tents, cooling stations, and, distribution and resource centers. Our team rode the city trolley on a regular basis interacting with riders to ensure they had the information and resources needed. They canvassed the City of Joplin through grid assignments daily knocking on every door in the neighborhood. They designed and hosted a Rebuilding the Holidays family event for those residing in the FEMA modular home parks. They assisted children returning to school in shopping for donated clothing and served as tutors to keep children focused through the summer. We established specialized teams for children and seniors providing services at the senior center, nursing homes, through meals on wheels, all daycare and preschool facilities, the Boys and Girls Club, and Joplin public school events.

Our *Healing Joplin* team was very innovative in finding ways to interact with the community and as a result thousands took comfort from the crisis counseling program that would not have availed themselves of these types of services otherwise. The team was instrumental in a collaborative effort with 40 other organizations across Joplin in establishing a Human Services

Campus at the site of the largest FEMA modular home park. Services were provided to residents on a daily basis through this site.

The branding of the *Healing Joplin* team through t-shirts, car magnets, yard signs, and brochures became a prominent and lasting feature that served to increase visibility within our community. The design of the program allowed for high levels of media exposure and the team utilized a variety of media strategies to gain public awareness of the program.

The affect the *Healing Joplin* team had on the community of Joplin was profound. We firmly believe that the City of Joplin would not be where we are today without the FEMA crisis counseling program and the *Healing Joplin* team. People across the country talk about the resilience of the citizens of Joplin, while some of this resilience is a part of the culture of mid-Westerners, the crisis counseling program and the *Healing Joplin* team further developed our resiliency skills. The presence of the *Healing Joplin* team, simply clad in blue shirts, throughout our community generated help-seeking behaviors and pride among disaster survivors. The crisis counseling program model met the needs of the City of Joplin in ways that traditional mental health services and approaches couldn't. The crisis counseling program provided the healing the City of Joplin needed.

Ozark Center did not accomplish this alone. If I was asked to use one word to describe this disaster recovery plan, it would be "collaboration". The Department of Mental Health team and the FEMA and SAMHSA officials made this happen for the City of Joplin. Their support, leadership and guidance allowed us to provide a unique and life-changing perspective on the spirit of Joplin. Should you be faced with a disaster situation, don't hesitate. Apply for the crisis counseling program immediately. You will receive an abundance of operational guidance and support and your community will receive a service that pales in comparison to anything you offer today.

Terry Wachter – Vice President of Mission, Mercy Hospital

“Keep going. Keep going. Keep going.” This is the message that plays in my head anytime doubt invades my thoughts. I hear those words from a New Orleans’ colleague with the experience of Katrina behind him. His professional expertise as a trainer of “Skills for Psychological Recovery” gave us our initial focus as we responded to Joplin’s psychological needs following the May 22 EF 5 tornado that destroyed a third of our community including Mercy Hospital, and took 161 human lives.

Don’t hesitate to ask for and accept appropriate help as it is offered. Our Mercy colleagues offered help. They had been through it all, of course. We listened, learned and trained our own people to deliver services. One benefit of that collaboration included friendly voices that reminded us to take care of ourselves so we could maintain the stamina to care for others.

Message: You may try to avoid self-care. Don’t. Listen to the voice that tells you to be kind to yourself. Take breaks. The long road to rebuilding and recovery requires a healthy perspective. Decide what helps you to “keep going.” You are recovering too.

I am an executive at Mercy Hospital in Joplin, Missouri. Following the 2011 disaster, I was asked to develop a mid and long term recovery program to offer psychological support to our own coworkers as well as the broader community. Behavioral health was not among my experiences, but community health, outreach and collaboration were. Staff came together around the work and developed a program that seemed to best suit our community’s needs and style. It was based on the Skills for Psychological Recovery: A Field Operations Guide, developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the Post Traumatic Stress Network and published in 2010. Because our hospital buildings were devastated, some work was temporarily suspended. It was an opportunity to utilize staff in new ways that we didn’t hesitate to grab. National trainers taught us the skill sets and we placed staff in recovery jobs until such time as their regular positions became available again.

Message: People can successfully achieve work they never thought of doing in their pre-disaster careers.

Individual resilience became our emphasis. Partnerships were our strength. We designed programming for several audiences: community seniors, our own coworkers, broader community and residents of FEMA housing. The following is a sampling of the activity in our plan that we titled Mercy Community Connections:

- Partnering with our schools, United Way, local foundations, business, churches and others enabled us to offer a place for people to reconnect as neighbors, friends and relatives, and tell their tornado stories at dinners hosted in designated school sites every other week.
- Ten week classes offered to adults provided a deeper dive into the skill sets used as a context for the dinners.
- Skill based games at our public swimming pools took advantage of wait times as families lined up to enter free swim times.
- Specific concern about older citizens feeling isolated drove an activity program planned for them. We had been doing senior programming for many years, so we used that experience to build specific senior adult activities.

- Planned rounding in our own temporary facilities offered skill based resilience information to our staff.
- Much of the programming was replicated specifically where many displaced residents were housed by FEMA in an effort to facilitate their participation.

Message: My home was not damaged by the storm. Each day, as I came and went from my completely intact neighborhood, guilt filled me because day lilies were blooming in the yard. I came to understand that the skills we were sharing with others were likewise intended for us.

Our own health system quickly responded to the needs of staff providing interim job guarantees, financial assistance to those who lost their homes and cars, celebration and support for interim facilities to mention just a few examples. We were actually set up with shared phones and laptops in a convention center before the FEMA team arrived to share the space. It may not have been as sophisticated a setup as FEMA's, but we had what we needed to dive in and solve the problems ahead of us. Support came to us from our entire health system.

Message: Be open to the numerous gifts afforded you by the wind.

Although you may not think so at first, because you are trying to get your brain wrapped around what has happened to you, your community or your family and how much has been taken away, there are gifts that a disaster can bring to your city. The Joplin storm took much, but we have learned that new opportunities unfold as you try to regroup and rebuild. At this writing, Mercy is building a brand new hospital that we would not have dreamt possible before the storm that took so much from us.

Message: We are a collaborative community, but we are finding new ways to accomplish tasks together. Trust your instincts. Partner with people and organizations you hadn't previously internally and externally. Collaboration works. Keep going.

My mother used to tell us that she did the best she could at any given moment in our busy family's routine. It's true after a disaster too. You may not get it perfect every time, but try to develop what is needed with the resources available to you. It can be perfected later.

Message: You will impulsively move fast initially, but try to step back and take a collective breath to allow your community the time to re-imagine itself, and possibly your role in it.

Year one, social connections were important, but in year two they are equally important. People can encourage one another to keep going. Year one, we were busy developing a recovery program as quickly as we could. Year two, we asked, when do we stop? When is what we are doing enough and done? When are old issues back on the surface and no longer specific to your disaster? Katrina's rebuilding continues today, almost eight years later. These are written as questions, because there isn't one answer. It is a community by community question, and an answer is discovered within each set of circumstances and the people involved.

Message: It may seem as if your collective adrenalin is gone after the first year. It was as if we somehow unconsciously thought the work would be completed in year one. Then you realize it isn't going to be complete in the second year either. It is the proverbial marathon.

We had to find new ways and places to work. On day seven, we were established in a field hospital at the south end of our campus. We stood together as bagpipes played a song of salvation, tears in our eyes and a large American flag draped over the side of our devastated

hospital building and declared that we were on our feet and not to be defined nor stopped by a spring storm.

Message: Celebrate. Build ceremony around progress. On the first anniversary, our community planned a walk across a portion of the devastation. Thousands of people left jobs to walk those miles and packed into a destroyed community park to rejoice in all that was accomplished during the previous twelve months. We stopped for ground breakings and a steeple raising, signaling our desire to stay here, rebuild here. Celebration is important. It marks progress. Mercy hosted an elaborate event for our staff. We also had simple receptions and picnics. Saying farewell to old land was tied to a groundbreaking on new land.

TIP: If it applies to your situation, we pulled stone from our destroyed building and cut it into small symbols with the date and facility name engraved on it for distribution to staff and community as they attended farewell events focused on heritage and how it provided us strength for the future. It was a response to multiple requests for pieces of the building.

Each community situation needs to define what activity will build resilience for them. The program mentioned above is mainly intended for one to one or small group consultation, but we chose to push it to large groups of people.

We have now modified our work to focus on what we considered the most effective tactics. We hope to save time for the next disaster afflicted place. We were moving too fast to worry about perfection in 2011. Now, we are renovating our material so it can be easily shared. Maybe, over time, we can become better and better as a country at how we return to post tragedy normalcy. The experience becomes part of your new normal. You rebuild after destruction, but it can change you. You may not really get over an event of such magnitude, but you do eventually find a place for it in the renewed person you become. Joplin's resilience maintains us during spring storm season with its annual potential for severe weather.

Message: Keep going. Keep going. Keep going. Thank you, Louisiana.

Debra Davidson – COO, Access Healthcare

The recovery work for ACCESS Family Care (ACCESS) began that disastrous night. Many of our employees do not live in Joplin, but as soon as our emergency call roster was initiated, which was part of ACCESS' emergency preparedness program, or when staff heard that a tornado devastated Joplin, they showed up at our Joplin clinic to see what they could do to help. They did not know if the clinic was damaged or destroyed, they just knew that their duty was to help wherever necessary.

Our clinic was not within the tornado zone and we were fortunate to have electricity and water, as well as a land line. The clinic manager immediately readied our clinic to accept "the walking wounded", as our community-based collaborative emergency preparedness plan dictated. In order to determine the situation, I went to the city's emergency operation command center (EOC). I was able to ascertain ACCESS' role during those crucial few hours. I immediately began to assist at the medical/healthcare coordination table, logging calls and solutions responses. ACCESS was announced and listed as an immediate first aid site where ambulance and EMTs could transport patients. As the rescue unfolded throughout the night and week, I remained at the health desk documenting anything that came. We coordinated supply delivery to make-shift and approved first-aid stations, tetanus administration depots and massive mobile vaccination campaigns.

As an executive representative of our organization, and a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), I had the authority to offer services to the community on the spot, such as offering unfinished storage space with a semi-dock to deliver surplus medical supplies, coordinate tetanus vaccination teams with the city and county health departments. Our staff distributed supplies to search and rescue teams as well as first aid stations established throughout the city. This work continued throughout the week and trailing months.

ACCESS' role in recovery included treating patients, as our practitioners and clinical staff responded that evening and into the early morning hours. We also triaged, administered treatment and continued to care for persons throughout the community by engaging community members in the streets as we initiated the "Red Wagon Brigade" whereby tetanus vaccinations and first aid assistance was offered. People continued to present to the clinic for care. Our staff administered to volunteers too that poured into the community to come to our community's aid. Search and rescue workers as well as volunteers were vaccinated at ACCESS prior to going out into the field. Also, persons injured during search, rescue and clean up were treated by ACCESS.

We organized our Red Wagon Brigade each day and coordinated with the surrounding community health departments in order to canvas the disaster zone in order to provide first aid, distribute basic hygiene supplies and administer tetanus vaccinations. With thousands of vehicles destroyed, people were unable to get out of their homes to seek care or were afraid to leave what few possessions remained. We were able to reach extended families, friends and volunteers that were removing debris and had not taken time to seek care and/or tetanus prevention.

The ability of ACCESS to call upon their professional partners, such as the Bureau of Primary Care and other FQHCs, allowed us to apply "lessons learned" from their experiences into our actions. Getting out into the community in an organized, proactive force was one such lesson.

Throughout the first year, ACCESS continued to offer their facility, space, staff and expertise. Coordination with other community partners strengthened as time progressed and the value of each other's strengths, abilities and capabilities became apparent.

Grants and funding that were funneled through ACCESS focused on the staff whose homes were damaged or destroyed, as well as patients that needed assistance, medically, financially, or psychologically. We coordinated with other entities and collectively we were able to reach to provide more services.

Opportunities were exploited when a quick thinking pharmacist from Neosho gathered his pharmacies' medications, area physicians' samples and pharmaceutical companies' donations to MSSU Health Science building. He provided prescription medications to those in need throughout that first week. As the onslaught of injured passed and the facility closed, ACCESS was able to offer space for the storage and dissemination of medications for those who lost their medications and/or prescriptions. The pharmacies that were destroyed were unable to reproduce prescriptions, but a collaborative process was set in place to appropriately determine medication, strength and dosing requirements for a 30-day supply.

Donated glucose testing items, insulin and administration supplies were delivered from the American Diabetes Association to ACCESS, and with the collaboration of Highland Dairy, we were able to borrow two new large chest refrigerators to store the insulin until we exhausted the stock.

ACCESS' relationship with the Missouri Primary Care Association (MPCA) afforded additional coordinated efforts during response, recovery and rebuilding. Experience of other FQHCs in disaster response benefited ACCESS with on-site assistance and directives as situations arose over time post tornado. We continue to share our experiences at educational venues and community or healthcare leaders desiring to become better prepared. To date, ACCESS continues to share our "Lessons Learned".

This experience made us proud of ACCESS Family Care and the important role we played in recovery from this disaster.

The Joplin tornado and our response to this disaster publicized our existence to the community, elevating our status as a significant healthcare resource.

All staff now understands and appreciates the importance of disaster planning and value in practicing our response to various scenarios.

We will be even better prepared next time.

We stand ready to provide assistance when disaster strikes our neighbors.

Lessons Learned:

- Prepare now
- Involve your staff
- "Train 'til you fail"
- Be involved within the community and be known for being proactive in preparing for community emergencies and responses
- Have pre-assigned roles, but be flexible as situations present

- The severity of the injuries took our staff by surprise as they were not accustomed to seeing life threatening and gushing wounds
- Get your staff (as well as patients, family and community members) psychological first aid and continue the service through the following year

You may need to change your attitude and status toward EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Build your partnerships and networks **now**
- Participate in city/county Emergency Preparedness meetings and drills
- Look for opportunities to infuse your FQHC or CHC into the plan
- Prepare and get signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Mutual Aid Agreements (MAA) on file
- Get medical & dental licensed professionals registered with “Show Me Response”
- Have a Business Continuity Plan in place
- When disaster strikes be sure a representative from your Community Health Center (CHC) is inside the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Keep a variety of communication devices charged and ready and train staff on their use – take one to EOC if cell phones don’t work
- Insure your leadership team and managers receive the weather alerts on their cell phones
- Insure that staff carry their work identification and proof of professional licensure
- Support the expansion and utilization of the EMSsystem to include FQHCs
- Maintain a phone land-line
- Pre-assign a medical credential verification process for volunteers dispatched through the EOC
- Register medical & dental licensed professionals with “Show Me Response” – state registry of volunteer Healthcare Professionals
- Communicate all public information through the information officer IO at the emergency operation center (EOC) and through a single representative for your organization
- Have a dedicated person(s) as the recorder of events to transcribe and take pictures as part of the CHC’s event documentation
- Itemize the use (and purchase) of supplies consumed in responding to disaster or emergency
- Keep manual forms available to anticipate the lack of computer access
- Utilize call rosters & keep printed copies available at home
- Have someone track all associated expenses

- Track donated inventory with a “quick” log – for accounting, but more importantly to assist in sending a THANK YOU later
- Let others know what you need

Public Utilities



Brad Beecher – CEO, Empire District Electric Company

As the May 22, 2011, EF-5 tornado headed into Joplin, my family took shelter. Over the next several minutes, we huddled together as our home was torn apart around us. When we emerged, our neighborhood was in shambles. Every house had damage, some were completely destroyed. As I ran from house to house to check on my neighbors, I had no concept of the destruction left in the storm's wake.

And when I began to get damage reports, I realized the magnitude. Beyond the damage to the electrical system which was severe, we had twenty-four employees who had lost their homes and twenty-nine others had significant damage. One employee's new car had landed a few feet from her in the basement. Another employee who had their vehicles destroyed, walked several miles to his work location, he knew he would be needed. I am very thankful; we did not lose any employees.

For Empire, our initial mission was simple: Re-establish electric service in a safe and reliable manner to those outside of the tornado footprint as quickly as possible. As the investor-owned electric utility that serves the region, including Joplin, our disaster recovery plan, which it seems, is used all too frequently, was pressed into action. Our disaster plan uses the same model as many other utilities around the country for ice storms, tornados, hurricanes, and floods. This portion of the recovery, like all others, focused on safety, engineering, line workers, meals, lodging, material, and both internal and external communication.

We were able to restore service to all those ready to take electric service in less than ten days. Much of this initial work involved construction of new lines in the footprint of the tornado, in essence spanning across the area of devastation to connect the houses and businesses still standing. Communications with federal, state, and city officials, as well as customers during this initial restoration were critically important. In addition, communication with shareholders and bondholders was essential to assure our financial integrity.

As I reflect on the initial restoration, I am thankful for the dedication of our employees. Every employee involved in the restoration was also personally impacted. They had friends and family members that had suffered great losses including the loss of lives. But, despite their personal losses, they showed up to work. We were some of the first boots on the ground and our guys saw firsthand vast destruction and many injuries and fatalities.

The second stage of the recovery began almost before the initial recovery was over. The resilience and work ethic of our customers and volunteers in the community began immediately. Debris removal throughout the community began and safety was forefront on our minds. Electrified wires existed where only days before wires were dead. Habitat for Humanity began construction of houses in the devastation area, power was needed for the temporary hospital, power was needed for temporary facilities around still standing Joplin schools, and sites were being identified for temporary FEMA housing units.

Our mission for the next stage of the recovery became almost as simple as the first: Establish electric service in a safe and reliable manner within the footprint and don't be the reason for delayed recovery. Where possible, a new electrical backbone was established within the tornado zone. We re-built the backbone in close coordination with the City of Joplin attempting to follow building permits and building permit trends. To borrow an analogy from an old movie, we adopted the strategy, "Build it and they will come." To do otherwise, would have slowed down

recovery. Customers ready but waiting for electrical service would impede progress, and others may have chosen not to rebuild if electric service didn't appear within reach.

After our backbone was rebuilt and the initial efforts for early rebuilds and temporary facilities were behind us, things began to get back to normal pretty quickly. Customers in and around the devastation zone are still concerned about costs and aesthetics. There is federal help and donations are available to many in the community. However, investor-owned utilities like Empire are not eligible to be recipients of such assistance.

After a disaster like this there is great praise initially, yet for a utility, there is still no free pass. Some things you might expect include:

- Criticism about costs as many customers expect restoration to be paid for by someone else.
- Criticism surrounding overhead lines which were re-established quickly, yet after the fact, many customers now ask why they weren't buried. There is little understanding of time, cost, or right-of-way considerations surrounding overhead lines.
- The normal not in my backyard syndrome (NIMBY) surrounding new substations to service new load.

Some lessons we learned:

It was critical to have someone from our staff in the Emergency Center. It allowed us to communicate our needs and concerns and to learn what others were concerned about so we could react quickly. We became a part of the solution team.

Employees directly impacted need time. If you can, give them time off to begin their recovery. They have families that need them worse than you do.

Some field personnel may have witnessed injuries and fatalities. They may need help dealing with this. Our Employee Assistance Program was able to offer help.

We had friends of the company, other utilities, and suppliers, who quickly offered monetary assistance for employees. We did not have an employee fund and were not prepared to handle donations. We quickly set up a process for handling these and for sending "thank you notes." We now have a 501c3 fund established. We found that many of our employees resisted accepting money; they believed others had bigger needs. I heard time and again, "someone else needs it worse than me". I recommend encouraging them to take the assistance. In reality, they all could use the help.

In the end, Empire's recovery was driven by employees that put customers before themselves, and in many instances, before their families and personal losses. Joplin and Duquesne's recovery was, and is still, driven by individuals willing to put community before self. It is driven by those with a vision to make the communities better than they were before. We have been an integral part of the recovery and will continue to be until it is complete.

Matt Barnhart – Senior Operations Manager, Missouri American Water Company

As a Senior Operations Manager for Missouri American Water, I am confident that what our employees experienced due to the storm on May 22, 2011, is unique and unlike anything any water utility in the United States has ever experienced.

I will begin with my drive to our water treatment plant. Immediately after the storm, I headed down 20th street to make that familiar trip that normally takes me about 15 minutes. Not on this evening this drive would take me almost 2.5 hours due to traffic and debris. That is the moment I realized just how dire our situation was. According to our plant operator, the levels in our storage tanks began rapidly decreasing right after the tornado passed. At the time, I remember thinking people were filling bathtubs in the event of a temporary loss of service. I did not realize at the time it was due to over 4000 services being ripped from the ground. To help explain what that is like, think about over 4000 garden hoses running full blast. When you picture that, it is easy to see why the water pressure in our system dropped so rapidly.

My first action was to ensure the safety of all my employees. We did have one employee that lost her home, but fortunately she was not injured. I realize how lucky we were in that respect to have over 40 employees all escape without harm to themselves and their families.

The damage to our own facilities made the recovery challenging. We were fortunate that the water treatment plant was virtually untouched, but our service center housing the majority of our equipment was destroyed. The damage path of the tornado essentially ripped our distribution system (miles of water pipes underground) in half, and our employees had to move quickly to reestablish water pressure for the one remaining hospital and to ensure fire protection was provided as the cleanup began.

What I witnessed from our employees in the days immediately after the storm was nothing short of miraculous. Crews from not only Joplin, but from other Missouri American Water Operations across the state worked to isolate the area of devastation so that work could begin on bringing the system pressure back to levels pre-tornado. To better explain the process our employees went through, imagine crews working around the clock in 12-hour shifts going city block to city block opening about 1800 hydrants one by one and letting them run for an average of five minutes.

Now it is easy to understand why the fact that crews flushed the entire water system in three days is such a feat. Couple that with the boil advisory issued due to decreased system pressure being lifted in 5.5 days and it is easy to see why I would put our employees up against anyone. The boil advisory lift was almost two days ahead of the schedule we set for ourselves at the onset of recovery. Seeing the effort and dedication from each employee, from the field crews to the office staff, is something that to this day fills me with tremendous pride. I like to think that our employees achieved a goal that would be unobtainable to most. When the service was restored, we felt like we had brought a sense of normalcy back to a community that was dealing with the very abnormal. That is one comment I heard repeatedly from our field crews; restoring water service made life feel just a little bit normal again in Joplin.

There are always lessons learned from such a tragic event. The quickest realization after the storm had to do with how we communicated to one another. Technology has made our lives easier, but in times of crisis, resorting to what we referred to as "the old-fashioned" way of doing things was critical. We had to dust off our paper maps and two-way radios. Cell phones are

great, but if you can't use them to talk, they are basically useless at a time like this. Texting seeming to be a way people reached family and friends, but for what we needed to do, texting was too slow a method of communication.

At the same time, it became clear to me the relevance social media plays in communicating to our customers. As power and data lines were restored, our customers relied heavily on Facebook to learn the latest in information. We have since placed more emphasis on keeping our status page updated and current as a direct result of what happened with social media in Joplin.

Flexibility was also a key to our success. Being able to adapt our ways of conducting business to make it easier for our customers affected by the storm meant making their lives just a little easier. Missouri American Water discontinued service automatically for all customers in the devastation zone. This was one less call they would have to make. The customers whose homes were destroyed did not receive a final bill. The account was closed as of their last read date, therefore generating a zero bill. The reconnection fee was and continues to be waived for all these same customers when they reestablish service. Finally we streamlined the process for demolition permits. We handled this process with *only two employees*.

One of the biggest challenges we had outside of the ones crews faced in the field, were the issues of logistics with feeding employees and finding shelter for the ones that came to assist from other operations. Restaurants that were in working order (with power) were limited and hotels filled up very quickly due to the influx of people into the community to help. It became a full-time job just to coordinate these issues. I would definitely add this element to any utility crisis management plan.

People often ask me if things have returned to "normal" for us here as a utility. I think it is accurate to say there is a new normal for us as a utility. We have increased workload in ways that are unusual, and we have had to change the way we do business in some respects. However, the one constant that I have seen in our employees and in the people in Joplin is the determination to get past the tragic events of May 11 and use this opportunity to build a better, stronger Joplin.

Business Community



Rob O'Brian – President, Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce

Keeping Jobs, Keeping Hope: A Chamber as “First Responder”

Having a disaster response plan is critical for any business. As we have seen many times, whether it's a fire in the building or a man-made or natural disaster that hits a community, there are always threats to a business's ability to continue to operate.

At the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce, we thought we had a pretty good disaster response plan. It covered the gamut from fire to natural disaster damage and even medical crises such as epidemics. Our plan was—and still is—used by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as a “best practice” document for other chambers. But nowhere in our plan did we address or even imagine a day when the Chamber office was standing yet more than 500 employers' buildings were destroyed or substantially damaged and, consequently, 5,000 job positions were gone.

With landlines and cell towers down, the best way I had to communicate with the Chamber staff was via text. It was slow, but workable. We were fortunate. Reaching out through the evening I found all of my team members safe. Although there were some anxious moments, their family members were found safe as well. Only one of our 17 employees had a home in the direct path of the storm. It was completely destroyed but she and her family were safe. They had gone to a restaurant for dinner and it was not in the storm's path. Several others had homes that sustained some damage, but nothing that needed immediate attention.

Our team members are proactive and know their jobs well. Our communications director was on our social media channels one hour after the storm, posting updates and where residents could find assistance as soon as that information was available. Others indicated they would be ready to go first thing the next morning, as long as they could make sure their family members were safe and secure and had time to get ready. Late that night, I went to our campus, which is a lofty term for our main office building and adjacent innovation center to see if we even had a place to go. Both were intact, although power was out. Regardless, we had a place to mount a response for the business community.

The morning after the storm we began staffing up. Again, this was nothing we had ever anticipated in our disaster plan, but it seemed logical that we needed to figure out how many employers were impacted and what the potential job loss would be. As power came on, first in one building then in both, we were able to get our computer system back up. We cobbled a T-1 line, still on, to one of our innovation center clients to a wireless unit and put it in the window closest to our main office across the parking lot. With that, we had limited but functioning Internet service in both buildings. We used our GIS system to plot the storm's path as best we knew it at that point and added our membership roster and Dunn & Bradstreet list to the system. At first pass, we found over 400 businesses and medical offices in the path.

Next, we felt that the only way to find most of the owners and managers was to go to them. With limited communication, our team members had to be out. We also felt they had to provide some initial assistance. We began compiling lists of things we believed businesses would need like general contractors, generators and building materials. We thought most of the firms would have lost their records, so we added phone numbers for insurance agencies, banks and attorneys; at least those we knew that were still standing. Since we also do the economic development for the city and region, we added available buildings to the list, which was an ever-changing list from the moment we could begin receiving phone calls.

While we were developing the lists, we called Lisa Robinson, the lead person at our small business technology development center at our university. We asked if she would bring her team to us to counsel business people, and she immediately said yes. And here's where good fortune stepped in.

Late morning, the first public information officer for the Small Business Administration came through the door. It was the same guy we had worked with when we had an ice storm a few years before. Bill Koontz told us that SBA would be setting up a full disaster recovery center in a few days and to let businesses know. We asked him if their center could be housed with us so the SBA, SBTDC and Chamber resources could be a "one-stop" shop. It wasn't the typical way SBA operated, but Bill made a call. Another SBA person came over and asked where we could do this. Fortunately, our innovation center had about 800 feet of training space for any company to use, even if they weren't a tenant. We offered that as the location and he took a quick look. Then a call was made and cell pictures were sent to the SBA office in Kansas City and Sacramento. It was approved. By Thursday, four days after the storm, the Business Recovery Center opened with SBA staff, SBDC counselors, assorted CPA and attorney volunteers and people from the state to provide the one-stop resource for businesses. The SBA people told us it was one of the quickest and easiest disaster center openings they had ever done.

Key, though, was that we had the SBA and SBTDC agreements done by early afternoon on that Monday after the storm. It gave us a real, physical place with resources that we could get to the impacted businesses. On Tuesday that effort began. We initially had four of our staff, in teams of two, going out into the storm area. They tried to stay away from the hardest hit places, where search and rescue was still in full force. They worked around the fringes, where businesses were damaged but not gone. As days went on they worked farther in, while we were also making more calls from the office as phone service was restored.

We used input from business people to determine what else they needed and then added those resources to the lists. One of the most important things we found was to offer something, rather than ask what was needed. Whether it was a business person at their site or a resident standing in the remains of his or her home, when we asked "What do you need?" the response was always that they were doing fine and someone else needed help more. But, when we offered a specific resource like a list of contractors or a generator or even told them they could get help at the Business Recovery Center, it always brought forward comments on what else they needed.

While team members were in the field and on the phone, we had others who were keeping track of what the needs were and finding the resources. In the first few days, we had large post-it notes of "haves" and "needs" on the wall where people on the phones could see them and also update them as situations changed.

As large as our staff is for a Chamber in a smaller metro area, we could not have been able to get to the businesses without the help of our sister chambers in the region. They provided a continuing resource of 2-3 people per day in those first few weeks to help answer phones, update lists and generally help us stay focused on the need to get businesses back on their feet. We owe all of them a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. Net result of the effort is that in the first two weeks after the tornado, we had in-person contact with 400 businesses. By the end of week three, it was nearly 1,000 in-person and by phone.

We also found other employers as we went. The list of destroyed or substantially damaged firms went from more than 400 to nearly 530. We tracked the status of every one of them, and we continue to track more than two years later. Before the end of the week after the storm, we had

the status list on our website, and shortly after that we began media campaigns noting that Joplin was still open for business and referring people to the website. We still get calls about some of those that have not come back and a few are still planning to reopen.

I could continue with a step-by-step of the weeks and months that followed and what we did but space is limited. But our approach was that we had great partnerships with the city and the schools. We worked to support them as needed, but we knew our role was to provide leadership for the business community. We believed then and even more so to this day that if the city got streets open and debris removed so rebuilding could begin, if the schools could reopen on time so children had a place to go and if we kept businesses and, more importantly, jobs, then our residents would have hope and would stay in Joplin.

To us it seemed that fast action and real resources were the logical steps and exactly what was needed. We have heard, anecdotally, from people we have come to know and respect in disaster recovery, that most communities work hard to help their residents and to get rebuilding underway, but seem to feel businesses will take care of themselves. They can't and they shouldn't. Businesses and jobs recovery go hand in hand with opening schools and rebuilding houses. They all need to work together to be successful.

In July, more than two years after the storm, I was asked by FEMA to speak to a group of public sector first responders about the need to think about business recovery if their community has a disaster. I talked about our approach and how we worked together as a community. At the end, a city fire chief from California said, "I never thought of it, but chambers can be first responders too." I hadn't thought of it like that either, but that's our team, staff and volunteers: people with big hearts, great talent and a willingness to act fast. I couldn't be more proud of the role they continue to play in Joplin's recovery.

Kirstie Smith - Communications Director, Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce

Joplin, Missouri is a community of 50,000 people by night. But by day, the population swells to nearly 250,000 due to the community's position as the economic, retail entertainment and medical hub of the region. Since 1917, the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce has been the voice of business serving the needs of our Members each and every day. How we serve those needs has changed a bit since Sunday, May 22nd, but our commitments to the business community and our Mission have never been stronger; "To improve the economic prosperity and quality of life in the Joplin region, and to be the principal advocate for, and provider of services to, its business community." The Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce is one of only 75 5-Star Chambers in the United States as designated by The U.S. Chamber of Commerce. 15 professional staff members serve businesses every day by offering events, programs and seminars to help businesses both large and small thrive in our community. We are the lead marketing organization for a unique economic development partnership that handles job creation and growth for counties in Missouri and Kansas. Businesses and members of the community look to the Joplin Chamber to be the leader of our business community. On May 22nd there was really no way to communicate with our members or the public. We turned to the only method of communication that was somewhat viable. I don't believe that "Utilizing Social Media for Disaster Communications" is a course you can take at our local university. This community wrote the lesson plans beginning on May 22nd and in the weeks that followed the tornado.

Chamber Communications

The Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce has been communicating with Members and the public for nearly 100 years. The Chamber has always tried to communicate in the most efficient and economical way with nearly 1,100 businesses and the 4,500 people that those businesses employ. In 2005 the Chamber utilized a monthly printed newsletter and a once a week e-mail update along with printed invitations to larger events to communicate with Members. The Membership was very informed about events, programs and services. However, we wanted to be sure we were communicating as effectively as possible. At that point we added Constant Contact to our marketing plan. Constant Contact is an email marketing service that helped us to better track the open rates of our email newsletters and track what was interesting to our Members. Results from Constant Contact led us to up our email newsletter distribution to twice a week. In 2006 we began to look at social media as another communication tool for the Chamber. At that time there weren't a lot of chambers on Facebook or Twitter and none that we found on Myspace. We researched Twitter, Facebook, Myspace and LinkedIn. We made the decision to have a presence on Facebook and Twitter. In general our posts pertained to our events or good news that Members share. There was not a whole lot of interaction on the pages but some and with the growth of our Young Professionals Network, we felt like a presence in the "social world" was necessary. We considered it just another tool in our communication tool box. Having a social media presence established well before the May 22nd tornado would prove to be the best thing we could have ever done to communicate with our Members as well as the rest of the Nation.

The Tornado

May 22, 2011 began like most late spring days in Southwest Missouri, with the threat of an afternoon thunderstorm. By the end of the day Joplin High School Seniors would graduate, 523 businesses would be leveled, 7000 housing units would be demolished, 18,000 residents would

be displaced, 9,000 for the long term, 18,000 cars would be totaled, 30% of the community would be destroyed, 1000 people would be injured and 161 of our friends, families and loved ones would be dead.

As the Communications Director for the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce it was my job to communicate. But what was I supposed to communicate? Once I realized that there was a potential disaster in our community I sat down and pulled out my iPad. We had no electricity, so there was no television. Sadly, turning on the radio never crossed my mind, plus – I don't think I even own a portable radio anymore. I went to the internet to try and get information, information that needed to be shared.

Our Facebook page was an established page was trusted by the social media community and it is linked to our Twitter page. I wanted to share all I could with the community and even the rest of the nation that was watching Joplin but I also had to be very careful that what I shared was good, accurate information. The very first post made by the chamber was at 6:52 pm. At that point all I could do was hope for everyone's safety. By 8:14 pm I had verified, credible information to post and share. Posts continued into the evening and critical information has been shared every day since. As I could verify information through the radio or sources on the internet I shared it with those watching us on Facebook. Others were posting on Facebook as well. KZRG, the local talk radio station, posted at 6:45 pm. Joplin Tornado Info was started by a local citizen in the area posted at 7:36 pm. Joplin MO Tornado Recovery posted at 8:01 pm and the City of Joplin posted at 11:26 pm. All of these Facebook pages would be valuable resources to me, our community and the Nation after the tornado. Joplin MO Tornado Recovery was started by a Joplin native now living in Columbia, MO. The page has thousands of followers and has since been gifted to ReBuild Joplin, an organization that is working with the St. Bernard Parish Project to help rebuild homes here in Joplin.

On Monday morning we sat in our dark office. We had no internet, no electricity, and no access to computer files or telephones. We only had cell phones and they weren't working very well. Text messages moved better than anything else, but still were not reliable. We sent an email to our Members Monday morning giving them critical information through a web-based email marketing system, Constant Contact. What we found is that people were still accessing their email and Facebook through mobile devices.

Under normal circumstances if I needed a message to get out to others besides Chamber Members, I turned to local media. That was not the answer in the critical days following the disaster. The local media was being slammed with people looking for loved ones and ways to help. While we knew it was critical to get businesses back up and open, we also respected the fact that searching for a loved one was far more crucial.

Our Business Recovery Center was ready to open and assist businesses by Wednesday night after the tornado and officially opened on Thursday, May 26th. It was the fastest U.S. Small Business Administration Business Recovery Center opening ever and it housed additional services that businesses needed to get back to business including professional business counselors, legal and CPA clinics, representatives from the Missouri Secretary of State's office as well as numerous other services to help more than 500 destroyed businesses and 400 more that experienced business interruption and 100's of others that would have financial impact as a result of the tornado take the necessary steps to re-open, relocate or rebuild in Joplin. This information was shared with businesses via our Facebook page. We continued then and still to this day as an information sharing site.

Posting on Facebook really took on a life of its own during the disaster. The process was slow. I would spend hours reading posts, verifying posts and sharing posts. Comments sent back would thank us for posting because maybe they had seen the information elsewhere but until it was on the Chamber's page they weren't sure it was accurate. While information for businesses was the most critical for us to share, we also shared residential information as well as volunteer and donation information. We are an information source so we had to be sure we had all the information that we could and that we shared it. Verifying non-business information was the most difficult tasks that we had to accomplish. Under normal circumstances as a chamber of commerce, school information would not be the first thing we would share with our Members. Residents wouldn't generally look for residential information at the chamber. But, all those rules were out the window on May 22nd. We shared as much information as we could. There were lots of places in the social world that people were utilizing for thoughts, prayers and hope. Very early on we made the decision to be an "information source" not a "thoughts and prayers" source. We wanted the public to be comfortable with the information we shared and trust that it was credible and verified.

Lessons Learned

Now that the dust has settled some on this disaster we have realized that our disaster plans were inadequate for the level of disaster that we endured. Most of those well written plans are right where we left them – on the shelf collecting dust. The communications section of our disaster plan has a phone calling tree schedule. I literally laughed and shook my head in disbelief when I looked at the plan after the tornado. Disaster planning is critical but even more critical are FREQUENT disaster plan updates. Our plan dealt with our office being destroyed, not 500+ of our businesses being destroyed. I had no plan in place to contact other communication professionals in the event of a disaster. Literally, if I did not have someone's number saved in my cell phone, I couldn't reach them for four days after the tornado! Facebook really was the only communication tool that we could rely on.

The most important lesson that I learned during the immediate aftermath of the tornado was verify, verify, verify. I had to be SURE that I was sharing as accurate information as possible. I also recommend assigning staff people or a trusted volunteer to the laborious task of trolling Facebook and other media sources for credible information. In our office, I am the staff. I don't have a communications team to assign one person to media calls, one to media appearances, one to social media... it was all me, so in retrospect, I wish I had had assigned at least the research aspect of posting disaster information in social media networks to a volunteer. Information needs to be share from a reliable established social media page. People would see information on Joplin MO Tornado Information's page, but not trust it until they saw it on our page. I also found it critical that we set the tone for our communications. I really wanted a "just the facts" tone to come from our page. Of course, there was compassion in our posts when necessary, but I feel like the overall tone was important to help convey the miraculous things that began happening immediately in Joplin after the tornado.

Today

At this writing we are two and half years post tornado. We have been on an amazing journey. Businesses have reopened. 90% have either already reopened or are rebuilding, plus more than 100 new businesses have opened since the tornado. Unemployment is low. Both private and public schools started on time in state-of-the-art temporary schools. The U.S. Small Business Administration has approved \$20.4 million in disaster loans for businesses. The Business

Recovery Fund to help businesses with long-term recovery was established by Wednesday, May 25, 2011. In first 48 hours funds raised totaled nearly \$50,000. Tax credits are available to increase fund to a potential \$7 million. All of the debris has been removed. No families remain in FEMA temporary housing units. Nearly 200,000 volunteers have come to the community to help. Homes are being rebuilt and home ownership has increased thanks to community outreach to share lending options with all residents. Our existing hospital has expanded to deal with increased volume. Mercy, which was destroyed, is fully operational in a temporary facility and is constructing a new multi-million dollar facility, which is set to open in January 2015. A master developer has been retained by the City of Joplin and is working to create public/private partnerships to leverage amazing projects for the community. The cross at St. Mary's Catholic Church became a beacon to so many in the aftermath of the storm. It stands to this day and will be moved to the location of the new church and school that will open in August 2014. The public school will complete two elementary schools and a middle school in time for a January 2014 opening and Joplin High School will welcome all their Eagles home, grade 9-12 including the technical school students in August 2014. THIS IS JOPLIN!

David Starrett – Owner, Joplin Medicine Shoppe

To quote Charles Dickens from *A Tale of Two Cities*, “it was the best of times; it was the worst of times”. The tornado of May 22, 2011, certainly gave my wife, Sheree, and me, our employees, family and friends, cause to feel a vast sea of emotions. Ranging from overwhelming loss to humble thankfulness, which would be our “tale” since that tragic day.

Thankfully, we were out of town on that day celebrating a high school graduation of one of our nieces in northern Missouri. After making a stop in Kansas City, we headed south as we received a text message from one of our employees --which said, “STORE GONE”. What?? We had no idea what it meant, no clue to the storm pounding down on Joplin and the surrounding area. Next was a call from a neighbor who was in Texas at the time, “Did we lose our houses?” Again, we did not have any idea, but soon learned of the tragic events. My cell phone was lighting up like a Christmas tree. As we traveled on talking nonstop with family and friends, we were able to tune to a Joplin radio station to hear the details. That last hour of travel seemed like forever.

As we approached Joplin, we had already decided to navigate around the outskirts of the area to reach our home in the south of Joplin. By this time I had left a voice mail with my pharmacy business consultant in St Louis. Sheree and I had also come to the conclusion that we had better cancel our trip (we were supposed to fly out that Monday for a weeks’ vacation in Cancun). We arrived at the house to darkness, no electricity, no garage door would open, and our cell phones were hit and miss. I left my wife and daughter at home and proceeded to drive the mile north to 20th street and try and “find” the Shoppe. Three check points later, I stood there, flash light in hand, looking at total devastation. The most vivid memory etched in my mind is one of silence. I saw many people walking the streets and sidewalks in total silence. Absolute shock! The fire and rescue crews were already at their tasks. (Later the next day, I heard with sadness that lightning had struck near the 20th and Connecticut command center and a volunteer from out of town had been killed.) For us, that night was just the beginning of what was the longest week of our lives. You see, we were open for business the following Saturday! How you might ask? We were blessed with a multitude of caring people: friends, family, business associates, employees and fellow business owners. We were fortunate in so many ways and timing was so key. We did not allow ourselves a long pity party, perhaps just maybe the first night, a little.

By Monday morning, six people sat around our kitchen table, and we began to plot and plan. We were coming back, and it couldn’t happen soon enough!!! Very early in the week, we found a space to lease. How fortunate we were! Looking back, that was a key to reopening as quickly as we did. Had we delayed even for a day longer, we would have been at a loss like many others. Interestingly though, we stumbled on this site as were looking at one across the street. A longtime customer, and fellow Rotarian, had called asking if we needed space as he had a building for us to consider.

My business consultant and associates were invaluable to me as they did a lot of “thinking” for me during the following days. Another key point was we were able to secure a store full of fixtures from a pharmacist in Mexico, MO who had just remodeled. They were free if we would come and get them. Associates made the trip within 24 hours. That donation was so important because buying new fixtures would have taken much longer.

By day two, we had made contact with our insurance carrier. They were already on the ground in Joplin, as we were not their only client hit. *I cannot stress enough the fact that we were well insured*, so I thought, and we were. We had *just enough* while others did not. We, with the help of many people opened on Saturday morning. We were especially thankful to find our computer

in the rubble with *no damage*. Our alarm and security company worked till late in the night to get our new site secured to meet regulations. The cable company helped as well. They had a much larger problem than I did yet they were there for me, their customer.

I should have mentioned earlier that another key was the off-site backup of all our data. Our Shoppe has three different computer systems linked together. I use three different off-site data storage companies, one for pharmacy data, one for everything else, and the last for my QuickBooks application. (I'm sure glad I had that one as it was the only one I had to restore). Another point I want to make is that my accountant keeps copies of all my tax and payroll records store in his office as well. (Very helpful indeed)

There were many reasons why we rushed to reopen our retail pharmacy opened in 1984. Our customers had built and sustained us over the years. We needed to be there for them. Early in the week we had arranged with fellow pharmacies in the north and south of Joplin to take care of "our" people while we were down. Even though not affected directly, these pharmacists worked long and hard taking care of so many as six pharmacies were totally destroyed.

There were many things we learned during our recovery as mentioned. You have to have enough insurance. When money is tight, many business and residential people may be tempted to cut back on coverage, opting for saving on premiums. Many did not have coverage at all.

In addition, we were so overwhelmed with the outpouring of love and care from our customers, neighbors and friends. Many stopped by just to check on us and to let us know they were still alive. We spent a lot of time in the weeks to follow, shedding tears and listening as each one told their story. There were stories of loss, stories of survival and stories of frustration. Eight of our customers died as result of the storm. Many others lost their homes. Four of our employees lost their homes. We cried with them, we listened and shared our sorrows. We were encouraged by those who lost a lifetime of memories in their home of 40 to 50 years in some cases. Yet they chose to take time to visit and encourage us. We were so thankful.

Even though we were only closed for 6 days, we were concerned for our employees. One of their first questions was "Will we be paid this week?" The answer was yes, they were, and it was even covered by our insurance.

Donations from around the world poured into Joplin. Some dollars made it our way, not a whole lot, but we gave that to our employees. It felt like the right thing to do. Without them, our business could not have survived.

Many people asked, "How can we help?" One of my longtime customers and friend suggested that I let him and his wife call all of our customers to let them know of our new address. I asked him, "Do you know what you're saying?" Over a three week period, that precious couple called everyone they could from a call list I gave them of over 10,000 names.

In addition to the personal calls, we contacted radio and television for new ads. We wanted to be sensitive to the loss in the community, yet we wanted to shout from the roof tops, "*We're back, Baby!*"

Reflecting back on our yearly sales figures for 2011, we did not lose much. Our total sales were only off in the dollar amount reflected by the week we were closed which was a blessing. We were worried if customers would return but they did, thanking us for opening so soon. What an encouragement for us!

Even though we moved about a mile south of our 20th Street location, *our business has grown* as time has passed. I am reminded of one fact that I learned early on as a small business owner. If you take good care of your customers they will take care of you. This phrase certainly holds true for us. We have been blessed with an amazing group of people and are honored to serve our patients, customers, friends and neighbors.

I believe this holds true for every small business regardless of where you are but especially here in Joplin where we have a wonderful Chamber of Commerce. They work so hard to tie us all together. In this respect we are “bonded at the hip” with so many as we manage our way through the days and weeks ahead-- knowing we are survivors. We have a “tale to tell”.

Media



Carol Stark – Editor, Joplin Globe

I drove up over the hill only to meet up face to face with a dark monster. It roared its way down the roadway headed, it seemed, straight at me. My heavy-duty SUV was picked up like a toy, and I was powerless. But seconds later, the vehicle was dropped into a ditch.

I watched in horror as the tornado moved beyond me to a trailer house. Then I crouched down as low as I could while debris hit my Ford Expedition. A board pierced the back of the vehicle, all the windows except the front windshield shattered, and then something heavy hit it, bowing the glass, but not breaking it. I was certain at any moment that something would hit that would end my life. There seemed no way around it. Yet, the fury of the storm moved on, killing motorists and people who never had time to make it into a basement.

When I got out of my vehicle, I was met with the sight of a man leaning over a woman in the ditch. She died a few hours later. Ahead of me, 16 others who had been in their cars died. In all 23 people lost their lives on May 10, the day before Mother's Day when a rain-wrapped EF-4 swept through Northeast Kansas and Southwest Missouri.

That was in 2008. Three years later, I would meet up with another monster. Only this time, I was within the safe walls of The Joplin Globe, listening in horror as scanners and cellphone texts informed us of the carnage outside. An EF-5 had hit, staying on the ground for 32 minutes.

While nothing could have prepared me or my newsroom staff for the May 22, 2011, tornado, or the days, weeks and months ahead of us, my first inclination was to remember my own experience and use it, along with the vast experience my staff had at covering storms. At that point, experience seemed to be the only thing we could depend on.

First hours counted

Skills, rank and seniority meant nothing in the Globe's newsroom that night. A young sports writer, whose apartment had been demolished, ignored his own personal plight and drove toward St. John's Regional Medical Center. Using his cellphone, he posted up some of the first footage of the aftermath at the scene.

Another reporter rushed in from his home, unaffected by the storm, and began posting everything we could learn to our website. Our first posts went up within 40 minutes of the time the tornado hit. My challenge in those first hours was two-fold. A large portion of my staff lived in the area where the tornado had touched down. It was a Sunday night, and only a handful of people were in the newsroom. Three of those were receiving the news that their homes were gone. They stayed and kept working. What else could they do? Do you send out people to look for your staff? Do you get the news out? We had no choice. We had to do both.

Shoe-leather journalism

When the power flickered, I held my breath. Our landlines weren't working in the hours after the tornado, but we quickly learned that we could text using cellphones. So, between texting reporters to find out their locations and texting family members to let them know I was safe, I discovered the cell phone was a lifesaver that night. But, so was the pen and notepad.

Our vehicles would only take us so far that night. Photographers began walking, confused and scared. Yet, they knew the world was waiting for those first images. It was Roger Nomer whose work first went out on The Associated Press wire. The Joplin Globe opened its website to the AP and later won an AP Instant Citation for the work we did that night. Our crime reporter, Jeff

Lehr, emerged from the rubble of his home and caught a ride to the newsroom. He walked in soaking wet and announced to no one in particular that he had lost everything he owned. Minutes later he started writing a first person account of the tornado that would be one of the most recognized stories of the week. His quote: "Get me to the Globe, I have an awful job to do." was reported over and over in national television interviews.

Reporter Wally Kennedy walked to Freeman Hospital West, which had escaped destruction. For hours he helped pass out blankets and comfort the injured. Finally, work could wait no longer and he got to the Globe. Five hours after the tornado hit, I had heard from every person in my newsroom except for one. Bruce Baillie, a page designer, was in his second story apartment at 20th Street and Connecticut when the tornado hit. His body was discovered three days later. Among my duties that week was contacting his family to deliver the news of his death.

Help was on its way

Journalists have a tight-knit relationship. That was evident as co-workers opened their homes to those who had none. Volunteer journalists, most of whom were former Globe reporters, reported for assignments the next day. Those who knew their way around town were a godsend.

There were also strangers in our midst. Some journalists were willing to do anything we asked, others we later learned, were at The Joplin Globe hoping to gain some credibility and a media pass so as to further their own careers. It wasn't long until they were asked to leave. While we tried to accommodate the national media the best we could by providing work space and granting interviews, I learned that I would have to pass on the questions so we could get our work done. Our community was our priority as was getting details correct.

We also served our readers by delivering bundles of newspapers to shelters. We established a Joplin Tornado Facebook page within hours of the tragedy so family and friends could find each other. Our role as the town's newspaper was to make sense of the chaos, inform our readers where they could get help, and tell their stories to the rest of the world. Meanwhile, 33 people who worked at The Joplin Globe were homeless. Members of Community Newspaper Holdings Inc. were here within hours working with management staff to assess needs quickly, get cash into the hands of Globe staff, rent them cars and hotel rooms.

We fed the entire 113 employees of the Globe three meals a day for seven days. Those who had homes still had to put in long hours at work. Those who didn't have homes relied on the company for food. The Missouri Press Association put out a plea nationwide and more than \$80,000 was raised for Globe staff. That, as well as money provided by CNHI, and individual's insurance turned despair into hope for many.

Duty

On June 12, just weeks after the tornado, we published a memorial edition called "Faces of the Storm." That collection of photos and stories about each of the dead was one of the most noteworthy accomplishments from our newsroom. A young reporter, Emily Younker, painstakingly collected the information. At the time of publication, the death count stood at 135 people. It would climb to 161 people. Photos filled nearly three pages of our paper. Babies, elementary school children, teens, young mothers and fathers and grandmas and grandpas were the subjects of this emotional tribute. Among them was a second-grader who loved Legos. A man who played Santa Claus every year and a Home Depot worker who loved to whistle so much that he had recorded three CDs. Even today, I cannot look at "Faces of the Storm" without crying.

We formed a newsroom team that met daily to assess the stories that needed to be told and prioritized the workload. For some, it would not be until August 25 that they would receive a day off from work.

Recording the Story

Three days after the tornado, I received a call from a former AP writer who was working on behalf of the Missouri Press Association. He said MPA wanted to make a documentary of the work of The Globe. My first inclination was to quickly turn him down. After all, we had no time to be in the spotlight. He convinced me though that our work would continue to be a lesson for other newsrooms. The documentary “Deadline in Disaster” was completed and debuted on the one-year anniversary of the tornado. It has since been shown throughout the nation as well as on public television. Earlier this year it received the coveted Mirror Award by Syracuse University. It continues to remind me just how important the newspaper¹s work was then and it challenges me to keep pushing for answers about Joplin¹s recovery.

I relied heavily on my own experience with tragedy, death, fear and survival to lead my newsroom, and I hope my community, into a place where they could do their best work. That work has been recognized worldwide. Through the Globe’s work, an accurate accounting of one of the worst tornadoes in history will remain on record forever.

As for my staff and me, we will never be the same. But there is no doubt, that we are better journalists for weathering this storm together.

David Mink - Reporter, Joplin Tri-State Business Journal

As a reporter, you have to tell yourself a lot of things during a disaster.

For instance, on May 23, 2011, as I hopped over smashed and debris-covered cars, I had to tell myself I was chronicling history. As I wove in and out of mounds of rubble – mounds that only 12 hours earlier had been homes where people were relaxing on a Sunday evening – I had to tell myself that I was performing a public service, telling the world the story of Joplin.

As a woman who had lost everything stopped picking through the remains of her life long enough to heckle me for pointing a camera at her, I had to tell myself I was doing my job.

I dealt with many difficult emotions in those first days after the 2011 tornado. Who wouldn't? I stood in the middle of my hometown and saw nothing but destruction and chaos on all horizons. I listened to my neighbors tell horrible, heart-wrenching stories of losing parents, siblings, and children. And, at the end of the day I went home to my comfortable, untouched home, where my wife and my children were safe and our TV fed us entertainment as if nothing had happened, and that was somehow even worse.

But nothing – nothing – hit me the way that survivor did.

In the hours after the tornado, we stayed in our homes. The deejays on the radio had told us to do so; if we went out, we would have merely been interfering with emergency responders. We had no power, and information was coming to us only through our car radio and through sporadic bursts of text messages hitting our phones all at once. In one of my frantic texts, I asked my editor the question: what were we going to do? We are a business journal, after all, not a daily. Ours is a niche publication, devoted to helping businesses grow by giving them news that matters to them. How the hell were we going to cover a tornado that, for all we knew, had destroyed our entire town?

My editor, ever the cool head when all the rest of the rats are ready to abandon ship, sent me one sentence in reply: "Come to the office in the morning, and we'll go from there."

I lived on the south side of Joplin, and my office was on the north. All passages through town, from east to west, had been closed. In retrospect, it seemed almost as if this tornado had targeted Joplin specifically, touching down just east of city limits and lifting off again only after it had crossed our western border. So I took the highways, driving nearly 30 miles out of my way to get to an office that was less than two miles up the road.

Once there, my editor handed me a camera and told me to go start shooting. People around the nation were on the edges of their seats, eager to hear any news about Joplin, and, more than anything, eager to *see* what had happened. And we were one of a few news organizations at ground zero. We would do what journalists do, my editor said, business journal or not. People wanted to see Joplin and to hear stories from Joplin, and we would do our part to make that happen.

I walked somewhere around five miles that day. I started in the commercial district, parking at the edge of the path of destruction and walking from there. The sight that I saw when I stepped out of my car took my breath away. Range Line Road is one of the busiest streets in our city, crowded on both sides by businesses that very nearly crowd one another. The street before me was nothing like the one I had known. Four lanes of blacktop were strewn with debris from the tornado – leaves, branches, pieces of lumber, drifts of mud and shredded foliage, dirty blankets, pieces of siding, lengths of electric wire. On either side of the street, scores of businesses had

been reduced to mere piles, some of which – most notably a shoe outlet – were littered with inventory that was quickly being ruined by the continuing rain. Where there had once been trees there were now only jutting trunks, stripped bare of leaf, limb and bark. An aluminum boat, shredded and torn as if mangled in a giant, metal mouth, was wrapped high around one bare trunk.

I walked. As I did the commercial district gave way to residential, but in the wake of the tornado everything looked the same. Streets I had known my whole life were suddenly unfamiliar. And everywhere people moved in the rubble, digging, searching. The city had completed the main search and rescue effort the night before, and most were simply trying to find a piece of their lives, something to take with them to the temporary shelter that had been set up for them.

And everywhere I took pictures. Everything I saw I snapped, knowing in my mind that we were informing the world, that we were performing a noble mission and telling Joplin's story to the populace. That is the job of the journalist, is it not? To inform people, and in doing so to affect some change in them, a new idea, a new motivation.

I have not always been a business journalist, of course. I have worked at my share of dailies, cutting my teeth on car wrecks, house fires and accidental deaths. In the decade I'd been reporting, I had carried a camera onto the scenes of countless accidents and what I had imagined were "disasters." But never had I felt the way I did on May 22.

It is a helpless feeling to have, especially in a situation where so many are in need of help. People from around the region had driven to Joplin overnight and were wandering the streets, offering what they could to help the victims: blankets, water, dry clothes, even money. And here I was, a Joplin native, a neighbor to these people, and all I had to offer was the greed of the public eye. People wanted to see; the world over, eager onlookers were craning their necks to get a glimpse of the wreck. And I was giving them that glimpse, while complete strangers were doing what they could to *help*.

Of course, journalism was driving me in more ways than one. Aside from an eagerness to inform the readers, I was also taken by the competitive nature of the industry. We weren't the only journalists on the scene, by any stretch of the imagination, and within days – hours, really – Joplin would be crawling with reporters from all over the nation, the world. The story was here, the story was now, and *we* had to be the ones to get it.

So I shot. I aimed my lens and shot. When someone pulled something out of the rubble, I shot. When someone helped someone climb over a tall pile of debris, I shot. I walked all day, up and down streets I had once known and now couldn't recognize, and I shot.

And then it happened. A family was digging through the rubble. They were bent in the rain, being soaked as they tried to find the piece of their life they were looking for. I shot. Maybe it was the sound of the camera, or maybe one of them just happened to look my way. I don't know. But they saw me, and they noticed me.

"Yeah, thanks, guy!" the woman yelled, waving a fist at me. "Nice job, taking our picture like that! Maybe you could, I don't know, *help us*?"

I ran. It was the anger in her voice that got me, the pure disgust on every word, and I knew that nothing I could say in that moment would change her opinion. I turned away and kept moving, my face flushing in shame. Behind me I heard one of her companions say something to calm her, and heard her rebuff him. But she didn't follow. I kept going. I had been in the field for hours,

walked miles through the wind-strewn lives of my neighbors, and the rain had soaked into my bones. My camera card was almost full. I was ready to go in.

We put the pictures on our Web site, and paired them with stories we'd written about our relatives and friends who had experienced the tornado first-hand. Within hours they'd received thousands of hits, which was not unusual for some of the more popular items we had featured on our site over the years. But interest died off soon, and within a few weeks they were lost in the infinite abyss of the Internet, consumed and cast aside by a hungry public that always wants more, wants newer, wants now.

I fell into work in the weeks and months after. I chronicled the path of our city's business recovery, from regrouping to rebuilding. I wrote briefs and stories and features and profiles, I covered ground breakings and grand openings and ribbon cuttings and anniversaries. The tornado became one of the largest parts of my life, and it changed the way I reported, made me invested in the subject in a way that I had never been before.

But I've thought about that day so many times. I've thought back on the opportunity that was in front of me and the responsibility that I carried. If I had been a factory worker, or a basket weaver, things might have gone differently. But I was and am a journalist. My job is reactionary; I cover the news when the news happens. And whatever callousness my actions might suggest of me, I am vindicated – ideally – by the reader, both today, tomorrow, and years from now, who sees what I've seen or reads what I've written and is moved by it.

What advice would I give to someone in my position, a local journalist covering a natural disaster in their hometown? When it strikes – and before you've grabbed your camera or notepad or tablet – decide what is most important to you. Is it the Reader, the intangible person that you will likely never meet but may carry your voice and your images into immortality? Or is it the Neighbor, the person in front of you, who cannot keep the memory of your kindness and warmth alive forever but whose gratitude will outshine the interest of 1,000 faceless Readers?

On so very many occasions, I chose the Reader. And I wish I'd chosen the Neighbor.

Rebecca Williams – Admin, Joplin Tornado Information Facebook Page

Here are the lessons we learned while creating and managing “Joplin Tornado Info” (2011) on Facebook and further implemented with “Branson Tornado Info” (2012)

INTRODUCTION

First and foremost, do not even attempt to set up a disaster recovery site unless you are fully prepared to devote yourself 24/7 to the effort.

Second, do not undertake this project unless you have reliable help. Social Media in a major disaster should not be taken on by a single individual. It is not a 9 to 5, Monday through Friday task because these sites do not manage themselves. Collectively, the five person core team for Joplin Tornado Info was experienced in professional social media management, marketing, PR, crisis intervention, IT, journalism, copywriting, construction, logistics, nursing, and meteorology. No one person could have covered all of this effectively. As soon as it was possible, administrators from utility companies, city officials, and other official groups were added. Social Media for disaster recovery required many hands, with one or two dedicated “supervisors” of the Facebook page. Do not undertake a project of this scope unless you are certain you can follow through as long as it takes. Chances are, you will be signing on to do this for several months. It is impossible to know the scope of the situation at the beginning of a disaster.

If you don’t have what you need to run a site, DON’T START ONE. JTI was created on an iPhone and largely run using an HP mini. Do not ask your community for your supplies. If you need something you don’t have to function, tap a volunteer that has the needed equipment and move on. Avoid cluttering the disaster relief effort with your own needs.

Our administrators were entirely volunteer. Self-promotion was strictly prohibited. We endorsed no specific church, charity, organization or entity. We encouraged JTI community members to “give of your time, talents, energy, and monetary donations to the group of your choice”.

Our mission was to be a clearing house for information, aid communication, and ‘connect the dots’ between needs and resources, not to champion any specific organization. JTI did not have any affiliations, rarely censored community posts, and was unbiased, and encouraged honest dialogue within the community.

We found that faith based organizations, groups and individuals were the lifeblood of the JTI community and the recovery efforts. We linked up, cooperated with, and followed as many government agencies and entities as were available but in no way relied on them. Help with the Joplin effort came from outside the region, including help with the JTI page. Through the internet, social media disaster volunteers can do tasks effectively from hundreds of miles away.

We believe that in order for a page to be successful, it must be participated in by all organizations working toward disaster recovery. With one source that is dedicated to the disaster, not only is it easier to find, it is unbiased and gains user trust. This source has no other purpose than to be a “go between” from individuals (fans, followers) to organizations. This should be managed by someone that has no other purpose. No other sources for this exist, as media outlets are commercial, and all other groups are heavily tasked during this time.

There will be no calls for monetary donations to specific organizations (although general calls for donations with a list of trusted groups included in the post are acceptable and encouraged). All organizations will be treated equally. They are all part of a larger system to be treated as a

whole. This page must be citizen and volunteer run although many of the guidelines provided are helpful when running any page focusing on disaster relief and recovery.

BEST PRACTICES:

1. Don't be afraid to make mistakes because you will.
2. Save contact info for everyone you contact in a meaningful way, however it works for you. Many people will find an Excel spreadsheet works well. We found it is best to have at least two copies.
3. Always refer to an official source. Find multiple Facebook page administrators from multiple agencies (We had around 30 at our peak). Have administrators claim ownership of their posts with an initial, first name, or group identifier.
4. Create a Facebook Group and include all page administrators. This creates a dialogue between administrative volunteers. Monitor all administrative posts for accuracy and scandal. If correction of an administrator is necessary do it via private message, or phone call.
5. Staff the page 24/7 until rescues are complete, basic needs are met, and utilities and communication are restored. This will take about 96 hours with a typical natural disaster. Tap night owls to staff the page overnight. Disasters don't rest, neither will you.
6. Remember to include who, what, when, where, how, and why in your posts and verify all the information you post. Call phone numbers to make sure you have the correct numbers posted.
7. Strive to do your best, but don't be too concerned about grammar. Getting the information out there is more important than getting it out perfectly.
8. Watch the speed of your "timeline," you may need to repost vital information frequently so it isn't lost in the shuffle. Timelines move fast so reposting the same information during the day is a good idea. Social Media Sites dedicated with disaster recovery attract all demographics including those totally unfamiliar with the use of social media. Be patient. Of course, there is such a thing as too many posts. Pace yourself when possible.
9. Check your ego at the door - seriously. Not everyone will understand what you are doing or want to be part of it. Move on to someone that does.
10. Never speak ill of other organizations, even when they deserve it.
11. This is a crisis not a contest. Don't be afraid to borrow from other groups and don't be upset when you are borrowed from. Fan all pertinent pages, repost and share. Also, follow what fans are posting. Give shout outs to groups both official and unofficial that are on the ground operating and accomplishing something. Reach out to other groups and promote their pages if they seem legitimate. Ask them to promote your page. If you sense something fishy cut ties ASAP.
12. Check every group or person offering help before posting it. Some groups will offer resources that are idiot-loops and a waste of time. If a person is on a cell phone with a dying battery at ground zero, minutes are crucial when seeking help.
13. Use and encourage the use of common sense. Avoid hearsay and clear up rumors; address the BS head on. Squelch known rumors. Avoid sensationalism. Refer to those

affected as survivors instead of victims. Be sensitive; would you want to read that 20 bodies bags were being sent to the apartment complex your loved one lives in? Delete or ban (if necessary) inflammatory remarks, spam, self-promotion, sensationalism and false or unverifiable information. We chose to hide all pages promising a monetary donation for each new like (such as \$1 per like). No flying fairies on the pages either (i.e. pictures of cats, cherubs, teddy bears playing guitar etc.). They don't contribute to recovery and waste vital space.

14. A successful page is a team effort so volunteer administrators are needed. However, don't give administrative privileges to someone you have not at least talked with in advance. Make sure they understand the goals of your page and guidelines in advance.
15. It is always a good idea to be thinking about this type of community page in advance of an actual disaster. Joplin was hit suddenly and the community page developed quickly over the next 12 hours. In the case of Branson, a page was already in place so when the tornado hit during the air morning hours, people were already using it as a way to communicate and share information.
16. Remember, you are a resource for those affected first, a resource for their families second, a resource for the surrounding area third.

Darrin Wright - News Director, KZRG Radio

It's the little things you don't notice in everyday life that become immensely valuable in the wake of a disaster. That's the exact thought I had when I was able to take a shower for the first time in a week, after spending most of my time bouncing between working and sleeping, either in my car or on the floor of the news room, at KZRG in the days that followed May 22, 2011. We started covering the storm about an hour or so before it hit: through our severe weather coverage policies, we started following a thunderstorm brewing on the western border of our listening area and watched as it grew into an EF-5 tornado that passed mere blocks by our studios. We stayed on the air for nine consecutive days after that, rotating on-air staff in and out and focusing on one thing only: our community.

Local radio is often downplayed in major media markets, and a lot of times in the smaller ones as well. After all, *why listen to the radio's news and weather reports when I can see them on TV?* That question was answered by our staff and the listeners who reached out to us afterward: because when the power goes out, the radio stays on. Radio broadcasters have the unique ability to keep people informed and involved, regardless of the electrical situation. As long as you've got a radio with some batteries, you've got a connection to the outside world, and for many Joplin residents, we were their lifeline. Cell phones were down, power to most of the city was out, and while TV and newspaper crews worked just as valiantly, their words couldn't be heard or read in the disaster zone. Our voice was being heard and that became apparent once the phones started ringing. People were calling us instead of emergency personnel, because our lines were open, asking us to broadcast where food and water could be found, requests for information on lost people, and just hoping for words of encouragement. We met every request we possibly could. I didn't find out until afterwards that many of the city's emergency managers and responders were actually listening to our coverage so they could coordinate their own responses. They would listen to our staff broadcast information about local homeless shelters that were now open for those who lost their own homes, and relayed that information to anyone who would ask. The same can be said for food and water locations, storm damage reports, and missing person reports and recoveries.

We provided live coverage of daily missing person reports, updates on the search and recovery efforts, and any and all pertinent information regarding what people should do to move forward. For nine consecutive days, 24 hours a day, our "On Air" light was on and we never stopped sharing every detail we could about the storm, its impact, and its aftermath.

It's the biggest lesson to learn, from a radio perspective: we are the community's lifeline when all else fails. We are there, in the car, in the home, and on the go. We can be that piece of information a person needs in a crucial moment, and we can be those words of hope in a time of despair. Unfortunately in most major markets, the "local" radio station no longer exists, replaced by automated setups put in place by bigger corporations. It leads to a situation like what happened with the tornado in Moore, OK, where a radio station opted to run a TV station's coverage of the storm instead of their coverage. Had that TV station lost power due to the storm, the radio station's listeners would be left in the dark as well, both figuratively and literally.

Severe weather coverage should be the linchpin of every form of local media, especially radio, and especially in the Midwest, where the weather can change in the blink of an eye. It's the one thing that impacts practically everyone: politics don't matter to some, and the same can be said for sports and other forms of entertainment, but everyone cares what the weather's going to be like. Those working in the media should be ready and willing to cover developing weather

systems, 24 hours a day, because Mother Nature doesn't care whether it's the middle of the night or the middle of the day. A storm can happen anywhere, anytime, and preparation and readiness are key.

Another worthwhile investment for those in my field would be a text alert system of some sort. We implemented our own shortly after things started getting back to normal... it uses National Weather Service alerts to then prompt a text message or email to a person's cell phone, as well as locally programmed and sent alerts, whether they be about contests or breaking news. It's a simple way to get a quick message across while you prepare for a more in-depth broadcast, and is usually cost-free to your audience. It can also be a useful tool to the broadcasters themselves, as the alerts can be used to notify on-air staff to prepare for covering such storms.

A third lesson I've learned from this situation is simple: repetition and accuracy are key. There were times city officials, who I'm certain were doing all they could, would release information that would then have to be retracted, corrected, and re-broadcast. This wastes valuable time and, for those who already heard the prior report but have since tuned out, misses an opportunity to get the story right the first time. If a correction needs to be made, it needs to be made, but it also needs to be announced more than just once. The average radio listener tunes in for minutes, not hours. Obviously things were different in our situation, but it's still something to keep in mind: you may have reported the newest information, but that doesn't mean everyone else has heard it. This also came into play when we were collecting information on where people could get assistance, whether it was supplies, shelter, volunteers, or counseling. The more you put your message out, the more people will hear it. Don't be afraid to repeat yourself, because every moment, a new set of ears is tuning in and hearing your report for the first time.

And finally, harkening back to my opening statement, never forget to appreciate the small things in life, whether it's running water or a small nap. People are hurting in the wake of a disaster, and need two things: information and comfort. A good broadcaster can provide the information in a fast, accurate, and professional manner, but a great broadcaster will also make sure to pass along a simple thought to their audience: "We're here, we'll keep you informed, and it's going to be OK."

Caring for Individuals



Renee White - Chairman of the Long Term Recovery Committee

I write these words almost two years after the event that has come to define my community as a community that perseveres and overcomes obstacles in a spirit of cooperation and brotherly love. I have been the Chairperson of the Joplin Area Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) for the previous twelve months and an active Executive Committee member prior to the chair position.

A long-term recovery group (LTRG) is a cooperative body that is made up of representatives from faith-based, non-profit, government, business and other organizations working within a community to assist individuals and families as they recover from disaster.

The goal is to unite recovery resources with community needs in order to ensure that even the most vulnerable in the community recover from the disaster. Recovery resources include housing, furnishings, transportation, childcare, employment services, crisis counseling, and resiliency skills for all disaster affected individuals, but generally focuses on individuals who are not able to recover without outside financial and/or social supports.

If your community has been impacted by a disaster and someone has suggested convening an LTRC, here are some recommendations:

- Understand where the LTRC model originates and read everything you can get your hands on regarding the structure and spirit in which one operates. The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) has a plethora of information and manuals on how to establish a local LTRC (<http://www.nvoad.org/library>).
- Understand LTRC membership is voluntary and thus, you will need to encourage and advertise the advantage of LTRC membership. One advantage is that benevolence dollars and materials are accessed AFTER duplication of benefits is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, so that benevolence is stretched to assisting more individuals in need. A second advantage of participating in the LTRC group is networking and quickly understanding the web of disaster recovery services from various sectors in which you might be unfamiliar with previous to the disaster.
- Develop structure immediately---establish sub-committees and define their function/role, establish routine with meeting times, establish governing practices, establish financial decision-making protocol, and establish lines of communication for the membership and to the general public, including those who are disaster affected and seeking assistance (website? Facebook? email?). Build relationships with local media outlets so that disaster recovery workers are aware of your coordinating LTRC and disaster affected individuals will have opportunities to learn about the vast array of resources and services.
- Time is distorted after a disaster. There is an urgency to act and organize and yet, it will take time to find rhythm and routine while developing a community-wide coordinating committee. Capitalize on the need to urgently organize but also be patient with allowing chaos to settle and the rhythm to surface. Stick with your commitment, as this is a time where many members will be frustrated with the desire to 'act' and yet, it is murky and unclear as to the direction the LTRC needs to move.

- Keep razor sharp focus on the goal of an LTRC—assisting disaster affected individuals by coordinating resources in a collaborative manner, with intentions of stabilizing the individual’s quality of life in a time-efficient and cost-effective way.
- Typically, individuals who are working in the disaster recovery field also direct LTRC’s, and thus, they are volunteering additional time to the LTRC process. If your disaster is large in scale and scope, seriously consider hiring a paid Executive Director and/or Administrative Assistant, as an Executive Committee member will spend upward to 10 to 15 hours per week. Additionally, seek persons to be on the Executive Committee who have experience in committee/community development leadership, even if they do not have disaster recovery experience, as the leadership experience should assist with keeping things coordinated.
- Intermittently offer stress relief strategies to mitigate compassion fatigue for the disaster recovery workers, including refreshments at the LTRC General Membership meetings; psychological grounding techniques (deep breathing, etc.); periodic use of poems and inspirational sayings, and always having a time for the audience to share ‘success stories’.
- Recognizing disaster recovery will have ebb and flow pace based on construction and volunteerism season, so will the LTRC activities ebb and flow. Additionally, as disaster case management is mobilized and eventually demobilized the pace of LTRC activities will also fluctuate. LTRC leadership should have an understanding of this and commit to at least a 12-month term, so that there is continuity in the process. We initially met weekly (both Executive Committee and the General Partnership), as there were many tasks to be coordinated. Within 6 months we had titrated to every other week meetings; and by 22 months we had moved to monthly meetings.
- As disaster recovery winds down, intentionally celebrate the successes of the LTRC partnership via welcome home parties, recognition of organizations who are demobilizing and leaving the area, and collecting ‘after action summaries’ of each program for the development of a lessons learned/best practices handbook. Media interactions become frequent during these events. Plan for a spokesperson or two so that the LTRC message is consistently conveyed.

In summary, communities affected by a disaster will greatly benefit from establishing a LTRC. The four “C”s (as described in the NVOAD literature) of cooperate, communicate, coordinate and collaborate have been the foundation for the work we have completed. Joplin Area LTRC added a 5th “C”—celebrate! Our community has learned to work hand-in-hand with organizations that were once strangers to the great benefit of individuals who were affected by the disaster. Our dream is to continue this level of cooperation, communication, coordination, collaboration and celebration.

This Blessing has guided me throughout the past 22 months. It conveys my deepest beliefs about the work we have accomplished. May these words compel you to new actions and new relationships.

“May you be blessed with a restless discomfort about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May you be blessed with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May you be blessed with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

And may you be blessed with enough foolishness to believe that you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.”

Stephanie Brady - Independent Living Center

Before the 2011 Joplin, Missouri tornado, I was not an emergency services person. I did not know the language of disaster and never expected to work in the disaster or recovery field. I had been the Director of Programs with The Independent Living Center in Joplin for nine years and was very committed to working in the community. What I have learned from the past 23 months since the tornado is that my community works together like no other to Collaborate, Cooperate, Communicate, Coordinate, and Celebrate!

From the beginning of the recovery process, we have had visitors from all over wanting to help us on our path to rebuilding. One group told us that the most important thing in disaster recovery is to remember to always Collaborate, Cooperate, Communicate, and Coordinate (from National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster literature). The members of the Joplin Area Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) added the fifth “C”—Celebrate! The Five C’s-- as we have come to call them--have been our mantra and have helped us not only stay the course but find focus as we move forward.

Collaborate

I knew the importance of collaboration long before the tornado and was a member of several collaborative community groups, including the Jasper County Healthcare Coalition and the Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Network. I knew a lot of the “key players” in the Joplin nonprofit world by name, but did not know anything about them on a personal level. I had no true understanding of the power and impact that community-wide collaboration can make. Within a few days of the tornado, we were thrown together to figure out what tomorrow would hold for the residents of Joplin. We had to work together like never before and had to rely on each other to ensure that the community would recover. Through the recovery efforts, we have become family.

I also learned that you do not have to wait to be invited to the table; you just need to show up and be willing to work together. What’s more, **if you are not at the table, the people that you represent do not have a voice.** During these events, I have become the voice of people with disabilities, making sure that their needs are being met in recovery and are being considered in rebuilding.

One of my favorite examples of collaboration occurred when an elderly couple was referred to me at The Independent Living Center (TILC). The couple was uninsured, living in the back of a commercial property eight miles outside of town, and not asking for any assistance because other people, according to the couple, were “worse off”. The conditions they were living in were not safe and after talking with them, we realized they were also afraid that the state would institutionalize them due to their living conditions. It took about a week of working collaboratively with FEMA, AmeriCorps, TILC and a faith-based liaison to help the couple accept assistance. Through that collaboration, the couple was moved to a FEMA temporary housing unit and today they are residing in a safe apartment and are doing well.

Cooperate

I have learned that the old adage “it takes a village to raise a child” is true in disaster recovery as well. **We not only have to collaborate but we have to cooperate.** I always assumed collaborate and cooperate were synonymous. I now realize that you can collaborate without having a cooperative spirit. Having a cooperative spirit breaks down barriers and helps people and organizations work better together. We cooperatively rely on one another and know that if

one does not fulfill a task, it impacts all of the other components. We developed a Senior and Disability Disaster Resource Committee that met weekly after the tornado. The group was made up of entities that tend to compete for funding and clients. We understood the importance of setting aside the typically competitive nature and through a cooperative spirit, we worked together to ensure that people with disability or age-related needs were being cared for.

Coordinate

I have learned not to be afraid to take a leadership role to coordinate or facilitate.

It is ok to stand up and accept responsibility for something that just might turn out bigger and better than you could ever imagine! In situations like in the Joplin tornado, all of the right people at the right time were in those leadership roles and were willing to stand up to help coordinate to bring about even better outcomes. I was not even at the community meeting in which I was appointed to be the chair of a Long Term Recovery Sub-Committee. However, I accepted the role and my participation with the LTRC has been one of the things that I am proudest of in my career. I feel like I have had a lasting impact on the improvements in my community.

Communicate

Early on in the recovery process, we had difficulty ensuring that effective and appropriate communication was occurring at all levels. Once we took the time to come together and really begin dialogs around recovery and rebuilding, the future began to take shape. Through exercises like the Citizen's Advisory Recovery Team (CART) community-wide input meetings, the entire community had opportunities to provide input about their vision of the future. Using sticky-notes and white boards, people from all socio-economic backgrounds could describe what they believed the best Joplin would be. Community input led to CART committees developing goals. Those goals came together in the CART's recommendations to the City Council. The City Council then approved the CART to implement the plan. All of the progress that has occurred started from the basics of communication.

Celebrate

I strongly believe in the power of celebration and as a community, we strive to celebrate every accomplishment, every church homecoming, every family that returns to their "new normal". Celebrating helps buoy the community and helps us remember the reasons that we continue to work hard to recover. I remember the days that Chick-fil-A, Home Depot, Wal-Mart and many more businesses reopened and how we celebrated as a community each time. When Joplin Public Schools started on time less than three months after the tornado, citizens lined the streets to welcome teachers, faculty and students back to class. The media continues to report on our accomplishments, showing the level of our resiliency on the local and national stage. It has helped the nation look to us as an example of what CAN be!

We never wanted to be that "community destroyed by a tornado". We are, however, the community that came out of the rubble and we are now soaring because we know the importance of Collaborating, Cooperating, Coordinating, Communicating, and Celebrating. We have tried to learn from others and hope that we can be a resource and an example for the future.

Garren McMillan – Rebuild Joplin Volunteer Website

I've never felt more "alive" than during those first few months after the tornado on May 22, 2011. My time with RebuildJoplin.org was brief, but powerful. Being on the front lines for both Joplin's disaster response and disaster recovery phases has changed my life, for the better--and I'm grateful. There are a few things that I wish our community could have known before our response and recovery phases occurred. While there's no doubt that Joplin was prepared better than most for a disaster, there were still some gaps.

Below are the three main lessons I'd love to share with every possible community:

Lesson #1: Every disaster is unique. There is no master plan. There is no one with all, or even most, of the answers. This includes every single one of the disaster agencies. They're expecting you--the affected community--to make many of the key decisions.

Lesson #2: While it's true that every disaster is unique, there are also fundamental truths that hold true for nearly all disasters. These truths have already been learned over and over again, in other affected locations. Your freshly-stricken community has better things to do than to reinvent the wheel. **ASK FOR ADVICE.** Don't stop asking until you're satisfied that your fellow citizens have imported every good idea that could possibly apply to your situation.

Lesson #3: Needless to say, disasters are confusing times, and wreak havoc on communication. This includes the common-sense types of communication that you'd just expect is taking place between the disaster agencies. These agencies do wonderful work, but they don't always talk much to each other. It's your community's responsibility to ensure that duplication of services is minimized, and that collaboration is rampant. **OWN YOUR DISASTER.** Don't be afraid to be bold--to lead the way for all those involved in the response and recovery.

There's much more I could share--it feels like so many experiences have been compressed into the last two years--but I feel it's important to really emphasize these three points. I'm so proud of the citizens of Joplin, and of humanity in general. To watch everyone come together in the face of adversity has been priceless, and I hope you have a similar silver lining in your own situation.

Scott Clayton – Director, Joplin Habitat for Humanity

The tornado of May 22nd, 2011 forever changed our community. And now, as the 2 year anniversary approaches, we have been living and working in our “new normal” for quite some time. What has followed from the tornado is a reflection of God’s love through the kindness of thousands and the hard work and resiliency of the people in this community.

The Joplin Area Habitat for Humanity affiliate had been operating in the Jasper County area since 1989. We were making those necessary steps to grow to a level of completing 3-5 houses per year. Qualifications for our program include having a need for better housing, willingness to partner by completing “sweat equity” hours, and being within a certain income guideline. Through an application process, our future homeowners are accepted and begin that partnership in the construction of their own home and the homes of other Habitat homeowners. In turn, once the house is complete and the “sweat equity” hours are done, the house is sold at a 0% interest, 20 year mortgage.

We were fortunate to have a working model that fit very well with the significant need that was and continues to face our community. In a town 1/3 destroyed and where 1/2 of the population was renting, a program that encourages community involvement and a commitment from homeowners to participate in this construction effort needed to expand greatly. Along with this effort from Joplin Habitat, came so many remarkable organizations in and outside of Joplin that took on the massive rebuilding effort that faced our town. It has truly been amazing to see the incredible efforts by everyone.

We have been very blessed to have been able to partner with so many to build 66 houses as of April 22nd, 2013 and will have 71 completed homes on the 2 year anniversary of the storm. These homes were completed through partnerships that included a 10 house blitz build with Tulsa Habitat for Humanity, partnerships with many area churches, the City of Joplin, and collaboration with the State of Missouri and major sports teams of Missouri that included the construction of 35 homes through the Governor’s Challenge. This paragraph cannot possibly be able to list all of those partners that have assisted us and the good work of many in our community.

As I look back to the beginning. These few recommendations come to mind:

1. **You cannot get everything done in one day.** There will be no way to accomplish everything you would like to accomplish in a day. Take time and enjoy your family and the best things in life. This is easier said than done, as most everyone worked very long hours as the tragedy at hand required it so. But, in reflection, it is ok to stop and I would recommend embracing your family and friends often and always know that through all things, God is good. Enjoy life.
2. **Lean on the amazing power of God and work through churches.** What the churches did following in the tornado was truly amazing. Many churches became relief stations and headquarters of volunteer efforts. Churches didn’t wait to fill what was needed and praise God to the extraordinary congregations who met this call. The gathering of churches and their participation had one thing in mind, to be a support to those who were hurting.
3. **Go to all the meetings and know the resources.** There were many groups who met collectively following the tornado. Go to all the meetings that you can attend. Not just for

the content, but for the people you meet before and after the meetings. The network that this will develop will assist in being knowledgeable in who, what, when, where, and how.

4. **Visit the headquarters of the working sites.** This will help in having a better understanding of what each organization is doing to assist.
5. **Keep things simple.** It's ok to keep things simple. Our community received so much support and interest in helping after the tornado that keeping up with all that were contacting us was a huge task. By knowing the resources and having good contact information, you can send a mass email to interested individuals and groups that lists updated information. Not having all the answers is very understandable. Trying to keep up with all the daily requirements is a task in itself. However, it is good to let those good people know viable information in assisting. Incredibly long emails that detail everything can be cumbersome. Hit the high points and answer the immediate questions.
6. **Expand income guidelines.** Joplin Habitat's Board of Directors made the decision to expand our income guidelines from 30-50% AMI to 30-80% AMI to serve a broader base of the population. We didn't change any other requirements other than expanding the guidelines which helped us in being able to meet with and qualify more families.
7. **Live by faith and seek him first. Be a Disciple.** Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

All you can do is your very best. And oftentimes, it doesn't seem like that is enough. Especially after the tornado that devastated our town, you can be left thinking that this is beyond me. And it is. This is not a situation where one or a few can get it done. It is the thousands here and abroad that helped make recovery happen every day. The tornado will always be with us. It will truly never go away. But, what has followed is God working through his people in a wonderful story of resiliency and recovery.

The lyrics of this song that churches across this land sing always holds true:

Oh no, you never let go
Through the calm and through the storm
Oh no, you never let go
In every high and every low
Oh no, you never let go
Lord, you never let go of me

Michelle Ducre – Formerly Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Within days of the May 22, 2011 tornado that devastated the Duquesne and Joplin communities, the City Manager contacted the Community Foundation of Southwest Missouri for assistance with establishing a recovery fund, and to manage the high volume of donations that people were sending.

Soon after, the Foundation established funds for tree planting, Joplin public schools, and benevolence funds for realtors and businesses to help their employees who were impacted by the tornado.

Leaders from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks established a disaster recovery fund, on behalf of its Joplin affiliate, Community Foundation of Southwest Missouri. The purpose of the long term recovery fund was to provide grant making to local nonprofit organizations with sustaining services provided to residents directly impacted by the tornado.

Here are the lessons we learned:

- Be transparent - trust is so important (share information with donors, public, media about how funds are used, how much is received). Answer questions openly and honestly...that kind of accountability inspired lots of donor confidence in the foundation and generated additional support as the word spread of our trustworthiness and good stewardship of funds.
- Reach out to other community foundations – the delegation from Kansas City and Tulsa were on the ground with us to tour the destroyed areas. Words and photos could never convey seeing the damage first hand. As a result, both reached out to their donor base and boards of directors to provide financial grants and support to Joplin. Foundations and some celebrities from all over the country sent aid to Joplin through the Community Foundation.
- Seek the wisdom of community foundations that have dealt with disaster recovery funding. We learned a lot about how to do disaster recovery grant making, efficiently, and effectively (delivering tangible impact). They shared forms and ideas that worked well.
- Serving on the long term recovery committee, attending citizen input meetings, and visiting one on one with FEMA provided an inside view of the depths of needs and the great work being done to help residents. It also illuminated gaps where there were critical needs that the Foundation could address (ex. 13 day care centers were destroyed, leaving a major shortage in infant childcare. We granted the YMCA a child care grant and expanded their infant child care center's capacity to serve more babies). That knowledge also was instrumental in securing more than \$4 million in funding from partner foundations like Lilly, Home Depot, and Margaret A. Cargill Foundation. The Foundation is the only entity (besides United Way) that could accept and manage charitable donations and quickly respond to recovery needs.
- Recovery is exhausting. Take time (often) to step away, go out of town (do not stay local) and see something joyful and peaceful. Reclaim your sanity and get centered. Get counseling, and find peers who can share this experience with you.

- Involve the community experts in the grant making selection process. Their professional expertise helps to make sound grant decisions, bench marking and tracking progress, and quickly identifying red flags and asking great questions. We primarily focused on rebuilding housing. The grant committee did site visits and reports that were helpful to provide updates to every donor, especially our foundation partners.
- Keep in touch with donors. Send them periodic updates (quarterly or twice a year) of the progress being made and thank them for making this possible. We utilized student interns from the local college to write newsletters, interview grant recipient agencies and clients served, and to help us tell their story. Donors deserve to see the impact of their gifts.
- Maintain a website that gives people updates and ways to give. Connect with other community partners to ensure collaboration and to maximize grant funding.
- We were an affiliate of a larger Community Foundation. Ongoing communication with the “home office” is critical, since they also receive calls, questions, and donations that will benefit your local community. You are their boots and eyes/ears on the ground.
- Use your calendar to track and **remind you** of every report, site visit, grant award that is due to your foundation by grant recipients, and those reports that you must provide to donors, foundations, or corporations.
- Utilize your funding network to ask for resources you need in your community. Offer to give tours and arrange site visits for them to see first-hand the disaster and progress being made in your community. We received leads and new connections because of a great network of people. Good360.org was an excellent partner in working with manufacturers to provide beds and other household materials. A local housing corporation and the Foundation paid shipping costs (the items are donated, but shipping is not).
- We waived all administrative fees to process disaster recovery charitable donations. While this is generous, realize the additional volume of work to your accounting staff so be especially nice to them.
- Do not ever agree to grant disaster funds for disaster relief concerts. Keep donor intent in mind, and ensure that the committee understands that all awards must provide a direct benefit to getting residents impacted by the tornado. (The Foundation endured public backlash from people affected by the tornado who were not pleased with the committee’s decision to grant the City funds for a benefit concert. The performer got trashed on Facebook and cancelled the performance).
- Remember that long term disaster recovery takes up to five years. In Joplin’s case, because the nonprofits, government, chamber, and schools already worked together, recovery moved faster. Stay in touch with your local base, and fill the gaps that exist, and find ways to collaborate with United Ways, Chambers, and other entities providing funds to rebuild the community. Celebrate your victories. Pray for wisdom. Learn from your shortcomings. No disaster is like the other. Everybody learns.
- You cannot fund every need. Do what you can do exceedingly well. Your committee may not agree to fund projects that you think are worthy. Share your views, but honor their decision.

- Encourage all entities to collect demographics about the people affected. One foundation wanted to support veterans, but no one asked the question on their forms or intake process. Others wanted to help victims of domestic abuse. We couldn't readily identify veterans who needed assistance. Elderly residents and people with disabilities are extremely vulnerable and required emergency assistance, plus help with rebuilding homes destroyed in the tornado.
- **Beware** of fly-by-night nonprofits and contractors that suddenly pop up in the face of a disaster. We heard lots of heartbreaking stories of people who were scammed out of their money, or who got shoddy work done on their homes from inexperienced, although kind-hearted, volunteers. Find some way to validate previous work history and experience, check licensing, and if needed, call the State Attorney General's office or licensing boards to verify their current status. Nonprofits, including churches, must be able to produce a 501c3 letter from the IRS.
- In the case of benevolence funds, the company must have a committee in place to review applications from their employees. They sign off on the award amount and purpose and notify the Foundation to cut checks (usually to the vendor, but on occasion, to the individual).

Jay St. Clair – Community Outreach Minister, College Heights Christian Church

I had never before actually heard the ominous sound of “the freight train” that accompanies a tornado and though I was a mile and a half from the path as it ground everything in its way, I heard what an EF-5 tornado sounded like that day as my neighbor, who was on duty as a EMS worker at Freeman that day texted me, “Take Cover”. We were babysitting 6 children whose parents were celebrating their anniversary and who found themselves in the monster’s path...they were able to make two short phone calls to us, hysterical and asking for help. My son-in-law and I headed to the parking lot of the destroyed Academy store where they said they were. The sight was surreal... the Joplin I had known for 30 years gone. The parents of the children were in shock and had somehow made it back to our house as we were looking for them. We ended up helping to evacuate the Redwood Senior Citizens Housing behind the rubble of Wal-Mart. There I met Billie Turner, an 87 year old lady who had just gotten out the hospital. She said family was coming. After helping others and opening up the church as a shelter, I told my wife I had better go back and make sure Billie really got out. When I got there, it was past 10 PM and she sat in her dark apartment with half the roof gone. I took her to my parents who live across the street from us. We spent the rest of the night helping the dazed residents of the Greenbrier Nursing Home find shelter in our church. As they stepped out of vans, they looked like ghosts, covered in white debris dust. It began to sink into my heart we would never be the same again.

Within 36 hours, we had filled the church with supplies from all over the city, state and nation. We were also coordinating 2000 volunteers in food and supply intake, distribution, rescue and debris removal. Ironical story, the day the storm hit, a man came to Randy our pastor and asked what we should do with the hundreds of tarps we had stored several years ago- they were all used within 48 hours of that question.

Whatever the Plan is, is not the Plan. BE FLEXIBLE!

I would say with certainty for the first couple of weeks, you don’t really have time to think as you are making decisions in the moment. In some of those moments, there is a sense of failure. In other moments, Randy and I, or some other leader would catch a moment when you would just cry and as quickly as it came the grace of God would help us move right back into crisis management mode, numb to the disaster continuing to unfold before us.

Communication is essential and hard because whatever the Plan is, is not the plan. The sooner you get that into your head the saner you will be in the process of watching the plan come together. When they say that all disasters are local they mean it. There is an outline for dealing with disasters but what you fill into that outline is massive. **Relationships are key!**

Partnerships are invaluable. We started meeting with the community, regional, state and national partners within the first few days, **every day**.

How do you prepare your church for disaster response?

These were things we did prior to May 22

- Prepare your people for financial instability
- Work with the poor in your community.
- Make friends with your city government employees

- Develop working relationship the social help agencies in your area
- Teach your people to serve
- Get some tarps!

These were things we needed to do after the storm that you can prepare for now:

- Pray
- Pursue well-being of your own people
- Name someone to these positions: Agency Coordinator, Housing Coordinator and Distribution Coordinator and Communication Director
- Implement a Finance management team
- Train support people
- Have counselors and pastors available

The most important role for churches in disaster is loving, praying and shepherding our people and community. Don't let the logistics, pallets, etc. get in the way of the emotional and spiritual support that we so uniquely bring to a disaster. In order to do that **you must take care of yourself.** Jim Woodworth of FEMA sat down with Randy and me within the first week after the storm and wept with us and encouraged us to take care of ourselves. He told us a sobering statistic that within 18 months after a disaster like ours between 70-80% of clergy would relocate to another area. By August after the tornado Julie and I got out of town and for the most part we were able to get away a day or two each month.

I highly recommend the PDA (Presbyterian Disaster Assistance) Compassion Fatigue Seminar. They came to our community more than once and their help was invaluable.

Dave Burgess – Pastor, First Presbyterian Church

Sunday morning, May 22nd, began with a heavy late spring humidity which hung over the area like a funeral pall. This thick air was not unusual and pointed to the normal transition between the seasons. Preaching from the 14th chapter of John's gospel on Sunday, May 22nd, I encouraged the congregation to heed Jesus' words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going" (John 14:1-4). While life has to be lived forward, it can only be understood backwards. As believers, we must always start with the promised end and live our lives free from fear.

I stated the God who saw us through all the predicted dooms in life would continue to be with us through this day and beyond. While all preachers hope their messages are inspired, none of us who gathered that morning had any idea of how prophetic this word would become later in the day.

I spent the afternoon with family, but returned to church in the evening for youth group. Upon hearing the weather warnings, we led the students to the basement under the sanctuary and spent the next hour underground, unaware of the destruction occurring just a mile south of our relative safety. I would not know the enormity of the damage until I returned home and watched news reports of the mighty wind which just wiped out a third of our hometown. It would take several days to comprehend the material devastation and many months (and years) to come to terms with the emotional and spiritual damage left in the tornado's wake. Assessing the physical destruction is relatively easy; it is much harder to uncover the damage to the soul.

First Presbyterian Church lost three members on that tragic May evening. The winds also destroyed 30 parishioner homes and another 30 houses were significantly damaged. The first week was a blur of journeys to the hospital to counsel those injured in the storm and to pray with those who still did not know the whereabouts of their loved ones. There were also funeral services to plan and families to encourage through shared tears. The church continued to make every effort to locate members and friends who were in the storm's path. Few slept well in the weeks following the storm which now had come to define our hometown.

I remember a strong desire for the church to "do something" beyond just spiritual counseling in the first couple of weeks following the storm. Many area congregations seemed to mobilize much faster than our medium sized church. Communities of faith on the edges of town had distribution centers in their large parking lots with food, bottled water, and clothing. While this certainly met a very pressing need, Joplin was soon overrun with supplies from well-meaning people from all over the world. Our role in the recovery would not be in reduplicating these efforts.

I was very frustrated in the first few weeks after the tornado and I felt impotent amidst so much need. Eventually, First Presbyterian Church decided to become a host church for the legions of volunteers now streaming into Joplin. Our denominational disaster response team encouraged this, but also warned us to be very methodical in setting things up. While I am thankful for their advice, I believe it was more of a hindrance as it stalled much of our momentum in transforming our facilities into hosting sites. **One piece of advice I would give to those recovering from their own natural disasters is to find their congregation's passion and then**

dive in. Things do not have to be perfect, they just need to be available. Churches can figure out what works and what does not as they go along.

Beyond this, I believe **it is important for each pastor and congregation to have grace for themselves and for their work in the recovery.** There will certainly be missteps along the way as one only becomes an “expert” after going through the disaster. No amount of preparation can adequately get an organization ready for these traumatic unforeseen events. It seemed like it took forever to get our facilities ready to host, but in reality, they were up and running within four or five weeks of the tornado. To date, we have welcomed over 2,000 guests to our facilities and these men, women, and youth have provided countless hours of service helping Joplin rebuild.

Finally, one of the things that helped me most following the tornado was the perspective of colleagues who went through their own natural disasters in their lives. One of my closest friends survived the tornado in Americus, Georgia several years earlier. He provided some comforting words, and more importantly, a listening ear for my frustrations. I received well wishes from many old friends, but it was particularly helpful to talk with a buddy who had a unique understanding. Similarly, it was also helpful to drive through the little town of Greensburg, Kansas two months later on the way to Colorado for a family vacation. In 2007, a tornado completely wiped this village off the map, but here it was with a new high school, new businesses, and new homes. It seemed to me a veritable “New Jerusalem” rising on the Central Kansas plains. If this town could recover, then so could Joplin.

No two natural disasters are ever exactly the same and each community will have to respond in unique and creative ways. **The greatest impact I had as a pastor was to provide a listening ear to the many people inside the church and around town who needed to share their story.** Sharing this burden provided a unique solidarity between the person recounting the pain and the one striving to listen caringly. Sometimes the stories came easily, and at other times it took a little bit of coaxing to get people to talk. I learned full healing will never come without the hurting person rightly remembering both the positive stories of others helping and recalling the painful details of the tornado and its aftermath. We all carry wounds from the event, and they will not go away if we simply ignore them. Our best hope is to acknowledge these wounds, pay attention to the scabs of our memory, and move forward to transformed scars. These signs mark both the hurts from the past and our hopes for the future. Hopefully, these scars will help to provide healing for the individual, the community, and for others who have not yet gone through their own violent wind.

Meg Bourne-Hulsey - Founder of Art Feeds

With great certainty I can say the scariest moment of my life happened a little over two years ago. 15 minutes after the May 22 disaster hit Joplin, I climbed through my neighborhood. I say climbed as the most accurate description I can think of. Cars in trees. Trees in houses. Ambulance sounds. The most horrible smell. It was as though every building had gone through a shredder. Like paper, ripped to pieces. Structures we felt were strong, crumbled into nothing. Where my neighborhood and Main Street once stood it was piles of sticks, rubble and trees. I was only able to identify my house by the one standing wall that was the color of my living room.

I found my neighbor and dear friend, Amy, crying out desperately for her two children. Jack, 4 and Kayley, 7. These were the same neighbors that left their small bikes in our yard and knocked lightly on the door early Saturday mornings asking if we could come play. I remember hugging Amy while she cried for her children. All I could say was, "We will find them, but they aren't here. They aren't here". I didn't know what that meant. They weren't there but where were they? Did this indiscriminate beast take these two beautiful children? We lifted up marred walls and crawled into a decimated basement both hopeful and terrified of what we would find underneath. In the same neighborhood a woman was searching for her daughter who had spent the night at a slumber party across the street from my home. This paired with a million other moments throughout the night were sickening. I turned the thoughts over and over in my mind: Where were the children I knew and loved? Where were all my Art Feeds students? What's more, where were all the children in Joplin I didn't know? Why didn't I know them? Were they safe? Were they alive? These thoughts resonated through the community as the evening agonizingly stretched on. Too many people, and too many little ones were lost in the most rapid and unexpected way. This moment changed everything for me.

As we searched for my neighbor's children I was resolute that if we found them alive, I would do everything in my power to reach them, to heal them with the biggest tool I had- art. To my abundant thanks- my neighbor's children were found that night. I cried tears of joy when I heard. Not all the tears in the coming weeks were joyful. Little ones we loved and shared time with in Art Feeds programs did not survive the storm, neither did our dear friend and volunteer, Will.

What happened in the next year tested hearts, strength and character. Like all the strong individuals in our community we pushed ourselves to be better, and work harder to help Joplin heal. It was as though everyone looked down at their two hands and said, "What can these hands of mine do?" It was a point when I had lost the most and Art Feeds had lost the most (supplies, our van, files, computers, etc.) that we had to scale larger than ever. What happened that summer in our organization and the greater community is proof that anything can happen if you are determined enough. I remember looking at my FEMA check for \$2,000 and figuring out how many art supplies the money could buy. That summer, we reached over 2,000 children in shelters, Summer school, camps and organizations. We gave them first a sense of comfort and normalcy, but also expression and a voice to articulate the trauma they had survived. The Joplin community had never been so exhausted, sleep deprived or emotionally spent, yet had never accomplished so much. Two years later I stand in awe of what we were (and still are) able to drive forward because the community put people and compassion first. We found a powerful tool of unfailing compassion that a devastating disaster forced upon us. We loved other people out of necessity and incredible things came from that compassion and love for our community and neighbors. I remember the deep connection I felt with my community in the months

following. I even identified with the cashier at checkout at the grocery store. I knew she had lost everything and was making ends meet. I understood how she felt with no home. But I also found solidarity in the strength of my community, knowing it wouldn't always be this way.

Each individual assessed their own talents and used them for the greater good. All barriers were broken down for the greater good of the community. I'm proud to say those barriers are long gone still, two years later. Art Feeds took what we knew and began to heal children through art. Restore Joplin did it through design and shirt sales, Healing Joplin- through counseling, Rebuild Joplin by resurrecting structures, LTRC with a long term recovery plan for community members and countless more. Before the disaster, Art Feeds worked with 500 children a week. At the end of the 2012 school year Art Feeds reached 1,700 children on a weekly basis. When the end of the school year 2013 came to an end we were reaching 2,600 children in 10 schools weekly. I am committed to making this number over 4,500 children weekly this year. This is *every child in Joplin*. Why every single child? Simple: They are the future of Joplin. The mental and emotional well-being of our children is exactly where the future of Joplin begins and will thrive. Not a single day passes without remembering those terrifying moments just after the storm, and the resolution I made with myself for the children that survived. The past two years Art Feeds and the children of Joplin danced, sculpted, constructed, painted, played and actively worked to cope with the trauma of the disaster through therapeutic art and creative education programs. Every child deserves this and more.

Last year on May 22, 2012, Art Feeds took part in Joplin's Unity Walk: A six-mile walk along the path of the tornado in unity and remembrance. We were a stop for children along the way. Clad in shirts and bracelets in memory of Will, we embraced the little ones in celebration of life - a celebration of the lives of those we lost and the lives that we worked to make better in the events of the past year. In that moment, there were bubbles, pinwheels and even a 300 participant dance party. It was a stark contrast to the same moment 366 days prior. There were children I loved, healing and smiling just ¼ of a mile away from my old home. The sun was shining, the kids were laughing, and I knew I was exactly where I needed to be, and where Art Feeds will continue to be for years to come.

Kim Gray – Development Director, Joplin Family YMCA

In response to the disaster, the Joplin Family YMCA proposed the idea of creating a one-stop shop offering human services to survivors adjacent to the Temporary Housing Units (THUs). The Human Services Campus (HSC) was founded in 2011 by several non-profit and governmental entities with the support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). According to FEMA, the Joplin Tornado is the first disaster to have an onsite facility to assist with recovery.

The main, or shared, goal of the HSC was to **“facilitate long-term recovery and reintegration of displaced Joplin residents back into the community, and to provide a central gathering place for all individuals and families affected by the tornado on May 22, 2011.”** The objectives included providing educational groups, daycare for parents attending educational groups, support groups, health and wellness classes, assistance with housing and employment searches, and connecting survivors to resources. These services had individual time frames, but the overall time frame was to be a total of fifteen (15) months, the projected duration of the FEMA THU Park. The proposed outcome was that individuals who sought these services, received these services, and gained assistance through the project, would be integrated back into the Joplin community by the end of the FEMA THU program.

The success of the Human Services Campus was determined by the amount of FEMA Temporary Housing Units that remained at the closing of the campus. The campus closed on March 29, 2013. At the time of closing the facility, there were only twenty-nine Temporary Housing Units left in Joplin. As of the writing of this report, all THUs have been removed and the park has closed.

Advantages

1. The advantages to having a Human Services Campus after a disaster are extensive. They include: one spot for recovery assistance for survivors; onsite location for convenience; collaboration of many agencies brought the community together; holistic recovery for survivors; and the creation of a catalyst for future collaborations between agencies.
2. The onsite location of the Human Services Campus was important in reaching many of the survivors. Many of the survivors lost their transportation in the tornado or lived in town close to their destinations. As a result of the location of the THUs, those without transportation found it difficult to make it into Joplin to complete their housing requirements from FEMA. In addition to being onsite with the THUs, having the one location for agencies to use for services enabled survivors to get all the help they needed in one location.
3. The collaboration between agencies was a major part of the HSC. The collaboration brought the citizens of Joplin closer together because they had a model to follow. The HSC was the catalyst for future collaborations between agencies and allowed all agencies to think outside of the box when it came to assisting survivors with problems. In addition, the collaboration had a holistic effect by surrounding the survivors with different systems to access during their recovery.

Challenges

1. The first challenge that the HSC faced was the timetable of the opening. Three months after the disaster, the agencies developed the idea of the HSC. It wasn't until almost a year after the disaster that the campus opened. How quickly an HSC can open post disaster might affect how much time government agencies can be involved with disaster recovery. A recommendation for other communities would be that they have a plan in place for developing their own HSC should a disaster strike their community. To do this, they should start conversations that include local agencies and local and state government; develop contact information for those agencies; have buy-in from those agencies; and be prepared to find funding to start an HSC.
2. The second challenge that the HSC faced was the assessment tools for success and the creation of a database. While the database was good for tracking individuals who received services, the Joplin HSC did not have one established until July 2012. This was four months after the opening. It would be recommended that future communities wishing to form an HSC hire an IT professional to establish assessment tools and a database before the opening of the project. Time the staff spent building the database was taken away from helping survivors. This should be something that is completed within the development of a community's disaster plan.
3. The final two challenges were attendance by the providers to meetings and the limited contact with survivors in regards to marketing. While we did have the "major" players at the table each month, there were many agencies who were there in the beginning that did not return after the HSC was established. Having a buy-in from all local agencies would make it easier to form those connections for survivors. In addition, having the buy-in would make it easier to reach survivors who might not understand what the HSC is about. The limited contact with survivors in regards to marketing was due to FEMA regulations that prevented HSC staff from going door to door to let people know about the HSC. The Joplin HSC staff had to rely on other agencies to get the word out. While this did work most of the time, it was discovered that some of the information was not getting to the survivors. There were many survivors that did not know what the HSC was about even at the time of our closing a year later.

In conclusion, the Human Services Campus was a success. The HSC was able to reach over four thousand individuals and assisted many with getting back into the Joplin community. Communities in which Temporary Housing Units are utilized post disaster should consider the concept of a human services campus such as the one implemented in the Joplin disaster to help survivors overcome barriers to reintegration.

Alison Malinowski Sunday - Executive Director, Lafayette House

Lafayette House has been providing comprehensive shelter, counseling, advocacy, education and support services for women and their dependent children in Joplin since 1979. We serve approximately 1500 individuals each year.

Our facilities are located less than one block from the devastation zone of the 2011 tornado. We lost utilities (electricity, water and gas services) for a brief period (a few days). Here are some of the lessons we learned in the aftermath:

1. **Take care of your staff first.** Your staff will be traumatized by this event—many of our staff lost homes and close family members. Some arrived at the agency in the immediate aftermath of the storm because they had nowhere else to go. Some were unable to get to work because of family situations and their emotional state in the aftermath. Be flexible and supportive of each person and help them sort out what is best for them. We assured all staff that they would be paid for their full work week for the first two weeks after the tornado whether they actually were able to work or not. We expanded our counseling and support services. We worked to revise work schedules and even work assignments for a year after the event.
2. **Make a plan to care for children of all ages.** Communities need to plan for how they will provide safe, structured care for children and teenagers after this level of an emergency. Parents need to be able to conduct the business of recovery knowing that their children are in a safe place. Teenagers may want to help with the recovery efforts, but this needs to be in a structured and supportive role.
3. **Domestic Violence shelters need to maintain capacity.** During the initial community response meeting with FEMA, Lafayette House attended and was prepared to open our residential shelters to community members without domestic violence or substance abuse issues. FEMA representatives discouraged us from doing this. They predicted that we would need our residential space for those meeting our mission. They encouraged us to stay focused on our existing target populations—stay in your lane. This was great advice and prevented a lot of duplication and overlap when resources were so stretched.
4. **We did see a 50% increase in the length of time families stayed in shelter** although we did not experience immediate increases in the number of families needing shelter for domestic violence. The community simply had limited alternatives for safe housing. As a community we did see an increased level of lethality in domestic violence situations about 6 months following the tornado. Now, two years after the event that has returned to pre-tornado levels.
5. We saw an increase in sexual assaults with in the first week after the tornado and continuing for about three months.

My organization spent much of last year revising emergency procedures. We now have back up plans for our back up plans. We revised our emergency contact plans utilizing several different options (text message, website and internet, in addition to traditional telephone). We also included a wider geographic area for our planning, allowing us to locate key staff not just off site but up to 50 miles away from our main facility if necessary.

Lysa Boston & Connie Andrews - Joplin Humane Society

The first thing I would tell people is that they will get through it. We all seriously doubted it in those first few weeks of chaos; but we made it. The days all blurred together into one long, hazy, exhausting marathon, and it was easy to get overwhelmed and want to run away. We all basically relied on each other to catch one another when we “fell” and were ready to cry. This is a stress that truly cannot be put into words. The grief we felt for all the loss surrounding our community and even some of our staff was at times more than any of us ever expected. But with that grief came the feeling of hope, when we saw all the homeless animals finding their owners or being chosen by new owners.

I would tell them to focus on what is in front of them at the moment. This is definitely not a “big picture” type of scenario. Look at it like an apple...you take one bite at a time. Looking at the totality makes your head melt.

The chaos is what sticks with me the most - a mass of people and animals, many of them injured, hysterical, confused and in a panicked state. We had to be their rock; we had to be calm. Crying was reserved for when we got home. We worked slowly and methodically and let the repetitive processes help keep us sane. We continued the same routines we always did; cleaning and feeding as always. We learned not be heroes - people that work for days and weeks straight are no good to anyone. We learned we needed to take care of ourselves as much as we did the animals. We gave our staff days off, and we offered locations for counseling to help overcome what we saw every day.

We also learned that everyone wanted to help, but letting everyone help was not always possible. Adding hundreds of well-meaning, but untrained people to a chaotic situation involving stressed animals was not a good idea. We changed our mantra from “come on in” to “let us schedule you for volunteering.” Donations were awesome, amazing and wonderful, but they seemed to take on a life of their own. Finally it came to the point we needed warehouse staff to manage everything. If I had to do it again, part of the plan should be “what do we need in the next week?” and the next month, and encourage people to consider scheduling a donation for several months down the road, especially for perishable items or items that you will be using on a regular basis for the foreseeable future.

Federal-State-Local Agencies



Sallie Hemenway – Division Director, Missouri Department of Economic Development

My “lessons learned” are aimed at my professional peers serving in State governments as community and economic developers:

The activities and tools used by community and business developers are geared toward long-term disaster recovery. Major disaster recovery is economic development on steroids. It is faster, more visual, and in many ways more impactful than the single, sometimes painstakingly-slow process of project development that we undertake every day of our normal jobs. It is your entire career set in a high speed camera and played in the time of a commercial. You really have to dust off everything that you have learned about economics and personal relationships and the development process and then apply it. You don't work in a field where you provide one standardized service complete with an operations manual. A disaster highlights that fact even more.

While it is difficult to avoid staring at the ground level view of the devastation, you need to back up and recognize the macro view and look at the sectors of the local economy that were impacted. You need to see the sum of the parts and not just the parts; or worse, not just one part. Only then can you find the right path to help with the bigger solution before offering to implement any assistance on the micro level. A disaster (like the Joplin tornado) can severely impact all of the major sectors (business, housing, infrastructure, and environment) or a disaster may have only a slight impact on one single sector. Since those sectors are all integrally connected in an economy, I don't think you can be as effective if you don't understand the impact the disaster has really had on the community or region.

After a disaster, if you oversee any funding resource at the state level, you will hear daily grandiose statements about need. Decisions are easily led by emotions, but a healthy dose of statistics can keep you grounded. Today's GIS mapping capabilities are phenomenal. Labor and employment information, census information, housing stock, local construction permitting, property sales and transfer information can all be at your fingertips. Use them. And don't toss out the simple realities of our trade such as: retail follows rooftops and mortgages require steady employment.

Lots of recovery entities will converge on a disaster scene. On the continuum of disaster recovery, some play a role in emergency response, some play a role in early recovery and stabilization, and some play a role in long term recovery. Some play all of these roles. Seek out those entities that play the long-term role similar to yours and then make sure you are on the team that is working in the same direction. Your business relationships are best accomplished with people who are vested in the common goal. You will likely know many of them anyway. But once you dive in the pool, swim in your own lane. The ripple effect of crossing a lane or grabbing a rope can create waves all over the pool.

It is equally important to understand the roles of those agencies and organizations that focus their efforts on the other parts of the disaster recovery continuum. Understanding what FEMA will and won't do will help you understand possible recovery gaps and avoid a lot of delay. Understanding how the population is temporarily or permanently stabilizing after a disaster can play a major role in a successful long-term recovery.

Recognizing the desired pace and timing of the private sector's recovery (business and homeowner) is critical. A lot of the best work is done just clearing the path for them. Using

financing and incentive programs to instill consumer confidence when they are ready can trigger redevelopment activities. Economic Development 101 principles apply: stimulate private investment. There is a palatable shift in a community when the conversation turns from what happened the day of the disaster to what needs to happen tomorrow. Recognize that shift and take advantage of it. Help to start and keep the train rolling. Even if a decision is wrong, fix it on the go. Adjust the track if you must, but don't stop the train. Take advantage of people's desire to recover.

Disasters are tragedies, but recovery can also be an opportunity. If the sector pieces didn't all fit the day before the disaster, you may not want to try putting them all back in the same place. And even if you did, they wouldn't all fit. I think finding and taking advantage of opportunities is an extremely positive part of recovery, but I also think you can stunt recovery by stalling decisions. Planning is very important, but waiting and delaying until perfection arrives goes against the natural human desire to move on. If you work for an economic development agency that has a standard set of tools, examine them closely. You will be surprised to find that a number of them may be readily (or creatively) adaptable to address certain gaps and needs in the community. With any source of financing for any sector, it really helps to work with the other agencies to share information, avoid duplication, and streamline access. For example, working directly with SBA allowed us to identify and assist businesses not suited for their disaster loan program; working with FEMA and the city allowed us to address infrastructure needs not otherwise covered; working with the local Chamber foundation allowed us to initiate funding for area non-profits in a coordinated manner, rather than separately; and working with our housing finance agency allowed us to support single-family and multi-family affordable housing. In a large disaster, you are forced to tailor financing tools to large groups of people in the similar circumstances in order to achieve some forward motion. Individually tailored financing will eventually be necessary, but I think volume is more important in the beginning. Of course every person is in a different situation with their levels of insurance, credit, extent of damage, ownership or rental status, but finding common denominators is helpful.

The rest of the tips are more common sense items that sometimes get lost in the intensity of the days following the disaster:

- Listen and then talk. Try to divert some of the pressure from the fire hose from which everyone is drinking.
- Respect emotions. Avoid emotional decisions.
- Don't spend all your time or effort on one issue when you can help solve 20 others in the same amount of time.
- Make sure you know the facts. Don't waste anyone's time with untruths.
- Unless you plan on moving there, don't "go native". Find a way for the community to count on your outside perspective as a good thing. Not a bad thing. They will need all points of view.
- The foundation of any success is built on important grunt work. Take it on.
- Earn your spot at the table. Don't assume you're entitled to it. Local capacity will dictate where you sit. They don't need you to replace something they already have. They need you to provide something they don't.
- You don't get to cause a problem and not help find a solution.

- Play by the rules. You can find solutions within the rules with hard work.
- Don't "out-story" anyone. Your own hardships will never outweigh someone who just lost their house or their loved one.
- Take breaks away. And find a way to deal with the loss and suffering you've seen and heard first hand.

Steve Castaner – Former FEMA Region VII Branch Chief for Long-Term Community Recovery and Federal Disaster Recovery Officer

After more than a decade in working with communities to examine the long term opportunity of catastrophe, new lessons and lesson modification happen nearly every day. To that end, I will highlight three key concepts:

First, I have concluded that all you need to know for recovery can be learned from *Kung Fu Panda* (and this was confirmed by the people of Joplin) when Po reveals that “there is no secret ingredient.” There is no magic checklist - it’s only you, your team, your community and your community’s vision. If you can see and believe in the future, you can make the future exciting and motivating.

I was familiar with several of the leaders in Joplin prior to the disaster. It was a high-performing community before the tornado so it came as no surprise that they were a high-performing community after the disaster. Great leadership and stewardship existing at the expected places like the City and School District but, it has been successful due to other leaders such Rob O’Brian, President of the Chamber; Troy Bolander, City Planner; Jane Cage, Chairman of the CART, and many, many more.

Each were able to build on their existing roles as community leaders and respond to the call of the disaster. Among their many contributions, Rob positioned the Chamber to be the voice of business perspectives, Troy navigated hundreds of “chicken or egg” decisions every week to make sure the many existing community plans were woven into the recovery and Jane confirmed that every voice in the community would be heard and would be considered important.

Second, disaster recovery is only two things, Communication and Decision Making. Yes, this is an almost crass oversimplification, because despite stating that it is only two things, disaster recovery is convoluted, circular, dysfunctional, frustrating, and complex. It is too fast and at the same time, too slow. Focusing on one element only means that there is neglect of another. No one seems to be pleased no matter how hard everyone works. Decisions must be made at every step, sometimes quickly and sometimes only perceived as needed quickly.

Communication is not the dissemination of a decision, but the effort and inclusion of the appropriate people and organizations to make the right decision. It can’t happen without good communication. Informing the public about what is happening is only a small element of communication. In order to make good decisions, leaders must be able to understand who is part of the decision, who can provide supporting information, who can support the decision, and who can carry the message of the decision.

Ultimately all things come down to decisions. There are so many at every moment and many come with huge political and personal repercussions. As a former FEMA employee, I can attest to the long hours and pressure our staff has to support communities and states, but I am very cognizant that our jobs are easy compared to someone that is going to live with those decisions on a daily basis for years to come. Decisions don’t have to be perfect, therefore the process used for a decision is as important as the decision. After all, even when a decision is made it needs to be carried out and that takes partners and resources throughout the community. If your partners and resources are affected by a decision yet don’t have some ownership of it, the likelihood of successful completion diminishes greatly.

I first learned from Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius and Kansas Cabinet Member Steve Weatherford after the Greensburg tornado that state leadership is critical to local decisions. In Joplin, this was confirmed by Missouri Governor Jay Nixon and Department of Economic Development Deputy Director Sallie Hemenway. Would Greensburg have been so willing to follow the “green” recovery vision if Governor Sebelius had not been first to the table to encourage it? Would Joplin have been so successful in bringing so many partners together for a common vision if Governor Nixon had not said he and the rest of the state were more than resources, but rather active participants right next to everyone in Joplin, in the trenches, to move the recovery forward?

Third, Recovery is different than Response. They are very clearly distinctive, yet there is no bright line when one transitions to the other. Decision processes, communication strategies, management and leadership styles, and leaders themselves all change between response and recovery. Depending on where an organization or project might be, those changes all happen at different times. The citizens of Joplin have shown that they not only wanted to be part of the recovery process, they demanded it.

With this distinction is the understanding that recovery is not the same thing to all people and all organizations. Every person and organization has a perception of what is recovery and when it is accomplished. Many of definitions of it are in conflict with each other or dependent on one another. The one place that should bring them together is a recovery vision. Joplin used the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART) to lead and to support this effort. The platform was used to remind us that everyone in the community plays a vital part in its success. There are great leaders who served as great supporters throughout the process connecting their neighbors, businesses and organizations to the future.

I feel very fortunate to have been allowed to watch and play a supportive role for Joplin’s recovery. It has been only a couple years since the tornado and great progress can be seen on every corner. However, it is only the tip of the iceberg for the difficult, exciting and rewarding times that are ahead. No one can doubt that the people of Joplin have proven that in the face of tragedy and destruction they found hope and vision.

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Jono Anzalone - Former FEMA Region VII Voluntary Agency Liaison

Joplin City Manager Mark Rohr often refers to the incredible recovery in Joplin as “The Miracle of the Human”. No doubt, the recovery in Joplin has been incredible and has captured the attention of the nation (and world).

Despite the amazing progress towards Whole Community recovery in Joplin, there have been underlying skeptics as to the speed and efficiency in the long term recovery process, at times creating “outside the box “ solutions to address community disaster-caused unmet needs. In fact, a recently published article made claims that the community of Joplin and emergency management had “no plan in place” to address the recovery needs of the community.

While it is important to embrace outside the box thinking, it is also imperative that we remember that tools which have long resided in the box and a myriad of voluntary, faith-based and community based organizations have been planning, preparing, and exercising together for decades. Member organizations of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD) and other organizations such 2-1-1, have long provided time-proven and efficient response and recovery resources.

Critics of the “recovery process” should first take time to ask several key questions before casting stones or making judgment as to the effectiveness and efficiencies surrounding long term recovery. The basic tenants of critical thinking have an established process map for analyzing situations which critics of the recovery process should be mindful in asking:

What is being done?

Who is doing it?

When are they doing it?

Where is it being done?

How is it being done?

Why is it being done?

Why are they doing it?

Why...then?

Why...there?

Why...that way?

What else is being done?

Who else could do it?

When else could it be done?

How else could it be done?

In emergency management, spontaneous-unaffiliated groups often neglect to recognize or address key tenants such as “what is being done, what else is being done, and who is doing it”, and duplicate services that well-established organizations are delivering. Other times, spontaneous unaffiliated groups simply dismiss “how it is being done” in hopes of re-engineering the response and recovery industry. Joplin was no exception as there were a number of organizations that emerged in the aftermath of the tornado without first stepping

back and asking the questions “what is being done, what else is being done, and who is doing it”. The old adage “if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together” came to mind as the response and recovery efforts in Joplin began.

New players to the emergency management world also discount time proven response and recovery technique in search of a better/faster recovery model, often failing to ask “why that way” and to use analytical research in lieu of anecdotal driven evidence. A key lesson learned in community recovery is that the timeline for recovery is long, and more than simply “rebuilding houses”. A recently published FEMA Lessons Learned documents stresses this point.

The Evidence; A Plan was in Place

Within 24 hours of the event, the long standing Joplin Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) and the Missouri Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) were on the ground providing critical human (and pet) services. This community based collaboration of both government and non-governmental organizations had been in place more than a decade; planning, exercising and training for “what if” emergency scenarios. The long standing United Way 2-1-1 call network was processing hundreds of call from volunteers wanting to help and more than 3,000 volunteers arrived in Joplin to assist. Over the course of the week following the disaster, a multitude of volunteer resources, agencies and personnel sprang into action.

Together with local and community officials, the City of Joplin, the State of Missouri, the Missouri (VOAD), the Governor’s Faith-based and Community Service Partnership for Disaster Recovery, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) worked to coordinate the assembly and movement of critical emergency supplies, medical aid and disaster relief, including the erection of 6 shelters, 120 Points of Distribution (PODs), and a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) managed by AmeriCorps St. Louis that would process more than 67,000 volunteers with more than 727,595 volunteer hours. The level of volunteerism in Joplin defied what survivors could ever imagine possible.

Volunteers from across the country arrived on the City’s doorstep donating their time and expertise to help the City get back on its feet. The 70+ volunteers from the Missouri Structural Assessment and Visual Evaluation (SAVE) Coalition, for example, logged more than 1,100 man-hours and evaluated more than 5,000 structures in the three days the group was in Joplin.

Mission assigned by FEMA, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) worked and to oversee the management of volunteer efforts, coordination of volunteers and the collection of donations at the VRC. Members from CNCS also continued to provide safety gear and transportation for disaster workers as they moved throughout impacted areas of the city.

Another community partner, the Missouri Humane Society worked tirelessly to reunite pets lost after Joplin’s tornado disaster with their owners. More than 400 pets were reunited with their human companions. As the number of days since the devastation mounted, the Humane Society continued to work jointly with the Missouri Southern State University pet shelter, in hopes of reuniting more than 300 pets that were still absent from their owners.

While the call to serve was far-reaching, producing the expertise and physical labor of civilians and civic agencies from miles around, perhaps no effort was as critical and so passionately met as the need to house over 3,000 disaster survivors and distribute more than 73,000 meals over the 21 days following the disaster.

The American Red Cross, through the grass-roots dedication of its local chapter and strong partnerships with local, state and federal agencies, worked diligently over 3 weeks to ensure

disaster survivors were afforded access to those resources and items they needed most. Within hours of the tornado, the Red Cross shelter, located at Missouri Southern State University, had approximately 110 people on Sunday night (May 22) and surged to 348 people by Wednesday (May 25). The Red Cross also worked with local officials in Joplin to arrange transportation to help get people to shelters and if necessary, identify additional shelter locations.

As the effects of the disaster literally came to light that Monday morning, hundreds of relief supplies moved from Red Cross warehouses to Joplin and other affected areas. Supplies included comfort kits, tarps, coolers, rakes and other cleanup supplies. Not forgetting about the great need for human relief, the Red Cross also ushered in additional staff, concentrating particularly on trained health and mental health workers.

Soon after the disaster, the generosity of friends, neighbors, and even strangers around the world became a reality, well beyond what disaster officials were prepared to handle. Through the timely coordination and expertise initiated by agencies such as the Missouri VOAD, Joplin Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD), the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventist Community Services Disaster Response, Catholic Charities, AmeriCorps and a host of other non-profit, education and faith-based organizations, the City of Joplin has received nearly 728,000 hours of spontaneous volunteer support, worth an estimated \$17.5 million in donated time! Additionally, an estimated \$1.2 million in outside donations has been offered through the National Donations Management Network (Missouri portal). The individuals, community organizations, volunteer agencies and humanitarian groups that have contributed to the initial recovery efforts in Joplin have become a critical part of the City's landscape and future long-term recovery efforts.

One of the greatest factors in the recovery has been the case management system set up in the State of Missouri that works through the Joplin Area Long Term Recovery Committee overseen by the Jasper County COAD. This total and complete process takes time to make sure that all the needs are met for each client that was affected by the disaster. After the dust settles in the short term/immediate recovery, a trained case manager develops a recovery plan for each person/family for the "long term", which is much greater than simply placing a roof over a survivors head. In Joplin, case managers are on the ground working through the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities, and the Salvation Army. Originally, there were over 8000 households affected and the task was daunting. Now, two years later, through the efforts of a grant that funded 16 professionally-trained full-time case managers the unmet needs of these households are documented. The case managers were trained to look at every possible avenue to meet these needs, with disaster related unmet needs going through the Long Term Recovery Committee. Housing was only one need that was addressed. Mental and physical health needs were also addressed.

More than two years after the devastating tornado, Joplin can be touted as a case study for community resilience. Each contributing organization was part of the emergency management planning, response and recovery team. It took every member of the team, at the forefront being the citizens of Joplin, government, voluntary, faith-based and community based organizations to bring about healing and rebuilding in Joplin, Missouri. It was a deep honor and privilege to serve in Joplin, a community that embodied a concept of self-less dedication to community.

Debi Meeds – Regional CEO, American Red Cross

When the tornado hit, our Joplin volunteers and staff were directly in the path of the storm. I live about 35 miles outside Joplin, and being the nearest person available I immediately left to open the shelter at Missouri Southern State University with whom we had entered into a sheltering agreement just two weeks prior. In all my years in Red Cross – I have never seen anything like that night. I will never forget the darkness, the smell of smoke, the cold rain, and constant wind. The Joplin High School graduation had just concluded at the university campus when the tornado hit on the other side of town. Those still there stayed to help. People who were worried about the survival of their loved ones – who had lost all they had – kept coming throughout the night to help.

Even as we were setting up - the first survivors began to arrive. They were brought to us shivering, wet, dirty, and bloody – with wounds barely treated before being sent on. Some had walked for miles, barefoot and in shock. Many had seen their loved ones killed by the storm and taken away to a mobile morgue. Some had been separated from family and were desperately trying to get word of them. That night I heard stories of kindness and heroism and wrenching stories of loss and suffering.

When I look back on that night and the days and weeks following – I marvel at all that was done to save lives and bring comfort. The thing I remember most about that first night is that for every person that came to us straight from triage with wounds stapled together and fresh blood drying on their skin, or was dropped off by a good Samaritan who promptly left to find more survivors – there was a volunteer there to hold their hand and watch over them through the night. I was as much overwhelmed by the love and compassion I saw – as I was by the loss and pain. As we worked through the night, the true scope of the devastation was unknown. All we really knew was that it was big and many people had lost their lives.

As I stood in the middle of that chaos with only intermittent communication with the emergency operations center I was calm. I knew the response plan and I knew and trusted my fellow responders. And even though the amazing staff and volunteers at MSSU and I had never run a shelter – I knew if we just did our job that night and made sure that the survivors coming to us had a warm, safe place to stay, something to drink, warm food, medical help, and most of all someone to just be with them; then things would work as planned and I was right.

Preparation paid off immediately:

There was a county and state response plan; we knew the plan and had exercised it.

1. Signed MOU with Missouri Southern State University key because of access to space for sheltering and many other activities.
2. Prepositioned supplies; cots, blankets, toiletries were brought swiftly to MSSU from surrounding counties.
3. Previous shelter trainings for partner agencies, trained volunteers arrived to help.
4. There was a written Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) Plan that we had implemented on several smaller responses.
5. Response was swift and there was speed to scale. Keith Stammer, the local Emergency Management Director, Dante Gliniecki, the State Emergency Management Volunteer

Agency Liaison, Chris Harmon, our Emergency Services Director and many others were doing the job for which they had planned and trained.

6. When a disaster happens agencies have specific roles. Local emergency management immediately works to protect life and property. Red Cross and other human services agencies work to meet basic human needs. All is coordinated from the Emergency Ops Center. I knew the County Response Plan, had participated in exercises and could depend on our fellow responders.
7. I had cell numbers – so I could communicate by text when calling was not possible. I knew how to contact the EOC and response partners.
8. Pet Sheltering - Some of the first survivors had been able to evacuate with their pets that were also wet, muddy and frightened. MSSU personnel located space in the basement for a pet shelter. Animal control arrived according to plan; soon people and pets were dry and safe.
9. Volunteer Management - So many volunteers came that night to help. They were still coming as we dimmed the lights in the sleeping area. I told them to go home, get some rest and come back at first light. There would be a team to direct them. AmeriCorps came according to plan and organized the volunteer workforce.
10. Our State plan says Response Organizations will begin face to face meetings as soon as possible. On day two, we began meetings at MSSU - information sharing/problem solving. Initially led by FEMA and SEMA all agencies involved in the response were encouraged to attend. This allowed all responders to be informed and to create an email list we continue to use.
11. Have multiple cell number for contacts. We needed additional Durable Medical Equipment and called the cell number of our main Independent Living center contact. He answered, even though he was in Puerto Rico on vacation – and got us to a local contact.

Success in the Response led to Successful Recovery Efforts

On May 29 - just 7 days after the tornado - we opened a Multi-Agency Resource/Relief Center (MARC) at the Bridge. This marked the beginning of Recovery. Together with over 30 local, state, and federal agencies (FEMA, SBA), Red Cross verified families' damage, opened over 1,500 cases, providing various assistance to over 5,000 individuals. Two meals a day were served and The Bridge staff and volunteers distributed bulk items. Church of the Brethren provided child care. Because so many vehicles were destroyed, transportation was a challenge. The Alliance organized local churches into a shuttle service using church vans. This "outside the box" solution has been presented as a best practice in disasters following Joplin.

The MARC became a gathering place for survivors. It was a place of healing and hope.

June 8, just 24 days after the tornado the Jasper County COAD met at 8:30 a.m. at the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce. There were 68 attendees present and the Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) Chair and Co-Chair were appointed and affirmed unanimously. I co-chaired the LTRC for the first year. The LTRC met every week for the first eighteen months, then every other week. We are still meeting today. Soon after this meeting the Partner and COAD meetings merged. It became important to merge the two meetings to avoid confusion and maintain unity. On June 12 MARC closed transition to Long Term Recovery and Disaster Case Management.

It has been said of Joplin that never have so many activities, been so well coordinated to help so many people in a single area. Recovery has been rapid.

Important factors

1. Relief to survivors was uninterrupted. Even during response we were anticipating recovery – standing up Relief centers and Disaster Case management swiftly.
2. Agencies worked together for the good of the survivors, leaving egos at the door.
3. Our local and state response and recovery models work!
4. Strong trust and collaboration built before a disaster speeds response and recovery.
5. Having partners and organizations that know the plan and have exercised together makes a difference.
6. Maybe most importantly, we knew each other, we had relationships built on trust and friendship.
7. We knew each other's cell phone numbers. The disaster struck on Sunday and it was months before anyone was back in their office to receive a phone call!
8. We knew we could depend on each other.

Lessons learned and what we are doing now to be ready for next time

1. We need to train all members of the COAD about the Long term Recovery Committee and Disaster Case management before the disaster.
2. We need to broaden the membership in COAD to include Recovery and Response organizations.
3. Connect COAD and City government so we work in tandem and have strong communication.
4. Be intentional about adding membership, including Faith-based and civic organizations as well as business leaders.
5. Teach the community about whole community Resilience and Recovery. The ability to withstand (survive) the disaster, quickly adapt, and recover.

District Staff – Office of Congressman Billy Long MO-07

Obviously, the details of any event are going to dictate the exact response of a congressional office. However, the key thing is to **BE AVAILABLE**. You cannot do that from your office. In the case of Congressman Long's office there was staff and Congressman Long himself, on the ground within hours of the tornado hitting the community. Outside the Red Cross Crisis Center, the Congressman's district office set up a tent with doughnuts and refreshments, and offered constituent services type help to any constituents in need. In reality, we were way too close to the event happening to actually provide any sort of specific casework help – however, citizens and local officials were very appreciative of our presence and valued that we were there to lend a hand in any way possible. Additionally, being on the ground allowed staff to start formulating some plans on how to address some issues that we believed would arise, based on what was seen.

We also had staff and interns that remained in the office immediately start to work on following social media outlets covering the event (mainly Facebook & Twitter) and compile that information so that we could pass it on to constituents as needed. They also did similar work in contacting state and federal agencies and obtaining information. In the days and weeks that followed, we would have them produce a daily informational sheet that provided updated details on the myriad issues resulting from the tornado.

Working with FEMA

Our office made contact with FEMA Region VII the day following the Joplin tornado, and they already had people in place. For the first week following the tornado, virtually all focus was centered on search and rescue operations. FEMA was working with the City of Joplin and outlining what services they offered and would take direction from Joplin as to what would work best for this community. Basically, our role in this process was to just make sure that whatever Joplin might be entitled to in FEMA services was in fact received.

There were as many as 6 FEMA External Affairs members that I would work with at any given time in the weeks following the Joplin tornado, and they will cycle out every so often. These are your contacts for individual casework and general questions regarding FEMA's presence and operations during this disaster. FEMA Region VII Administrator Beth Freeman hosted a "Casework Seminar" for the Missouri Congressional delegation roughly 4 weeks after the tornado, in an effort to prepare us for the amount of casework that could present itself as victims move through the recovery process.

Suggestions

1. We would encourage any Congressional office to make contact with FEMA External Affairs (if they have not already reached out to you) as they will have multiple contacts on the ground most likely staging at an Emergency Operations Center. Within a few days you will be contacted by a FEMA external affairs specialist and they will set up a meeting with you to introduce the personnel that will be on the ground for an extended period of time, these will be your contacts for everything related to FEMA. You will be given a briefing book that outlines the disaster declaration process and the different types of assistance available from FEMA.
2. Familiarize yourself with Individual Assistance, Individuals & Households Program including Housing Assistance, Other Needs Assistance, Disaster Unemployment

Assistance, and Crisis Counseling Assistance. Public Assistance will come at a later date, but it would benefit you to learn as much as you can.

3. For the most part, at the beginning of the disaster, you will be directing survivors and those affected to the Disaster Recovery Center to register with FEMA or to shelters. It is important that everyone who suffered any damage to register with FEMA, whether they are eligible for assistance or not. The immediate, specific help your constituents need is not available from your office. You essentially serve as a resource.
4. While you do not need to be overly difficult to deal with, do not hesitate to press FEMA on issues as they emerge if necessary. For example, a small community just outside of Joplin and actually just over the Jasper County line, Wentworth, had several homes destroyed by the tornado. This was extra unfortunate as the county where Wentworth laid, Lawrence, was not initially a part of the disaster declaration. So although there were some homes that were destroyed by the very same tornado as what hit Joplin, there seemed to be no help coming their way. FEMA took what we believe was an excessive amount of time in getting out to this area to conduct assessments, and our office contacted the local FEMA officials daily to try and get them to speed this process up as much as is possible. Our office also worked to persuade FEMA to press for Lawrence County to be included in the disaster declaration, since no declaration would severely limit the resources available to the affected residents of Wentworth.

Casework

In an event like this, a congressional office can expect a significant amount of casework. However, it should be noted how the casework in this instance actually happened:

- It was not immediate. Citizens of Joplin were trying to sort through the disaster that had just occurred. They were not yet concerned about FEMA payouts, damage assessments, individual assistance, etc.
- Much of it doesn't fit a neat definition of casework. Some of what you deal with will fit follow a pretty established framework, but often times you are being forced to deal with an issue on a much more informal basis. For example, Congressman Long's office made calls to local Joplin officials concerning street closures and the trouble it was causing citizens trying to get to their houses and clean up debris, etc. Similar issues often popped up in the weeks following as well. Be prepared to be a one-stop shop for constituents on a broad range of issues.
- It can last for a long time. By that, we mean that you may have casework related to it occur a few years after the event. Our office has been contacted even this year by a constituent who is having an issue with FEMA and their payout to him after the tornado.

From an immediate standpoint, the best role a constituent services operation can play is to be a repository of information for folks needing specific help, as well as an avenue that can cut through the red tape and hardships that folks are experiencing.

Suggestions

1. Work with FEMA and local aid organizations on developing a contact list of different resources for constituents. In Congressman Long's office, there was an effort to not just pass on the contact information to constituents, but we oftentimes made the initial

contact for them and would share the situation and the constituent's contact information with the appropriate resource so they could work together directly.

2. It is great to want to try and get some credit on getting something done for constituents, but anytime you can effectively remove yourself from some issues is for the best. Sometimes, serving as a go-between between a constituent and a federal agency just creates an additional level of frustrating bureaucracy for the constituent.
3. Try and attend as many informational meetings with federal, local and state agencies as possible. Staying up to date on everything is essential in providing constituents up-to-date information and in thinking through the various odd questions or requests you may receive.
4. Be present in the community as much as possible. This can be hard to accomplish due to staff resources, but in our case, we had staffers in the community the night the tornado struck Joplin, the day after in helping staff a Red Cross drop-off and sorting through donations, and in the days, weeks, and months after with our Joplin field office representative. Just being out and about and being accessible provides much needed assurances to the community that your office stands by ready to assist with any issues.
5. DO NOT be afraid to rope the Member in on an issue if an agency is proving particularly obstinate. In our case, Congressman Long made personal calls/requests to the United States Army and even state officials to try and get good results for constituents on issues that needed something more to get done. In cases like this, an office should feel free to use the whole weight of any congressional office power it may have.
6. Do not be frustrated by the helpless feeling your caseworkers may have – you cannot invent casework out of thin air. By simply being available, and being everywhere you can, you will have numerous opportunities to assist.
7. From a casework perspective, it felt at times like all of this was a somewhat passive process, as we were dependent on being contacted by folks (in large part) to provide assistance. However, the problems and issues the District Office dealt with are things it can likely anticipate and work towards resolving even more quickly if a similar disaster were ever to occur. The best role a constituent services office can play is to simply support the community affected and its residents, by using the resources they have available.

Working with State & Local Officials

Our experience in working with state and local officials was overall very positive. There quickly developed an understanding between all parties that we had the same end-goal in mind: the short-term and long-term recovery of Joplin. Any sort of political disagreements were set aside, and everyone recognized that it would take a concentrated effort from folks on all levels to get the necessary results.

Suggestions

1. Confer with local officials, let them know what you are hearing from the federal agencies about the situation and in turn be sure they keep you in the loop as much as is possible as well on what local officials have planned.
2. Don't let the state/federal government divide be an impediment towards getting something done. For example, a real issue in Joplin quickly proved to be the recovery by

the families of their deceased family members. The Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS) was the entity responsible for the release of bodies, and while our office recognized the difficulties that they were encountering in identifying the bodies, it quickly reached a point where the families just needed to start the burial process and start gaining closure. Congressman Long made several calls on behalf of constituents and in general to DPS to try and resolve these issues. Staff can assist in these instances by developing state contacts beforehand and then utilizing them when necessary.

3. Similarly, we had issues later on with insurance companies and constituents who had received FEMA money for their homes and property. By having previously developed working relationships with the Missouri Division of Finance, Insurance & Professional Registration, we had an immediate resource available to direct insurance abuse concerns to.
4. If you have not already done so, establish a solid working relationship with all federal, state, and community leaders on the ground. This will allow for information to flow freely from all sides. Just remember it's a team process and who gets the credit does not matter. Results are all that matters.

Epilogue

If you have read until the end, you may be wondering how we are doing at the approximate two and one-half year mark. There is a lesson that we have all learned and it is perhaps best stated by Mitch Randle, our fire chief. He said “It is important that while you want your recovery to happen as quickly as possible, it is also important that it happens correctly.” The wheels of government and recovery turn slowly. We’ve been blessed to receive millions of dollars in federal and state aid. There is tremendous pressure to spend that money in the best and wisest way. Understanding the constraints, shifting dollars and programs from funding source to funding source and weighing priorities is akin to working a complicated jigsaw puzzle. I wrote early on in a CART document that the tornado was “an opportunity we never asked for but can’t afford to waste.” We have one chance to transform our city into a better and more resilient place. We owe that to our citizens.

To date, we have a high school, a middle-school/elementary school combination and an elementary school under construction at an estimated cost of over \$200,000,000. Mercy is building a new hospital south of the interstate that will be a state of the art facility when it opens in 2015. Our commercial corridor shows almost no traces of the tornado and is home to new retail outlets that we didn’t have before. Out of the 500 businesses affected, over 450 are back in business almost 100 new businesses have entered the market. We expect to see a newly designed combination movie theatre/library begin construction in the next six months as well as a new planned living center for senior citizens. The long process of re-greening Joplin has begun.

On May 22nd, 2013, the second anniversary of the tornado, former Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, came to Joplin to present its citizens the first ever Rick Rescorla National Award for Resilience. I had the privilege of accepting that award on their behalf. My remarks contained these words:

“I’ve seen men and women bend but not break beneath the load of responsibilities heaped upon them by May 22nd. I’ve seen tired faces around the meeting table as we pushed and planned. I’ve also seen a community that dared to dream by writing their vision on sticky notes in a crowded gymnasium. I’ve seen us recognize our potential and grow bold to reach for what we could become. I’ve been heartened time after time when we have put our individual organizational needs aside to work for the common good.

And while we have pride in our accomplishments, we are not foolish enough I believe, to become a proud people. Our successes will always be tinged by the tragedy that befell us that evening. Our hard work is a testament to the lives that were lost. The restoration and strengthening of our community is the fulfillment of a promise made to future generations to honor the sacrifices made on May 22nd so we might be better prepared for what could and will come our way again.

Through our own tears, we have become a community washed in compassion that only comes from shared experiences. We understand now, in ways we could never have understood before what it is like when your foundations crumble. The first chapter of Second Corinthians contains these words, “Praise be to God ...who comforts us in all our troubles so that we comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received.” While we are grateful for the recognition of our community resilience it should be not regarded as a trophy but as a tool we can use to help pass it forward.”

The essays contained in this book are one of the ways we hope to pay it forward. If you live in a community impacted by disaster we can say with certainty that “we understand”. If you haven’t experienced disaster firsthand but are interested in concepts, we hope these essays have been an encouragement to prepare as fully as you can.

Lastly, we hope that you’ll come to visit us in Joplin. Every day we continue with the hard work of recovery. We are proud of our city and our progress.