It Happened in My Town

Collaboration and Staff Support in Crisis
Aiden Street, Pioneer Library System
PLA 2016
Pioneer Library System

- Cleveland, McClain and Pottawatomie Counties of Central Oklahoma
- 11 Branches and 7 Rural Information Stations
- 2 (24 hour) Library Machines and 1 Book Box
- 350 employees
May 18, 2013
S OKC Library Building

Photo by Andy Rine
May 18, 2013  S OKC Library Staff

Wedding photo of Shelver Supervisor taken with some library staff.
Deadly and devastating tornado outbreak

2:56 pm EF-5 touchdown in Newcastle

Continued on ground for 40 min

Tracked through SW OKC and Moore

24 lives lost, 353 injured

Billions of dollars in damage
May 20, 2013
Libraries and Schools were Open

- Library Staff at work
- Customers in building-54 sheltered in place at one location
- Library Staff at schools doing outreach
May 20, 2013  S OKC Library Staff

18 staff in three counties directly impacted

Schools, Post Office, Hospital, Roads, Stores, Gas Stations impacted

Loss of Electricity, Phones, Water, Sewer
May 20, 2013
S OKC Library Building
My Story

Underground shelter
A makeshift memorial set up at Plaza Towers Elementary school where 7 children lost their lives
Chaos
Frantic searching
No street signs or landmarks
My awesome neighbor
Responding for the call to help.

Social media call
Hundreds of volunteers show up with tools, trucks and other equipment to help
Crews begin arriving from out of town and out of state
International attention
My home. I never was fond of housework....
May 22nd Dept of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and FEMA Administrator Rich Serino visits a Disaster Recovery Center in Moore
May 26, 2013 President Obama visits with National Guard members during a visit to command center at the Moore Fire Department and hugs a resident near Plaza Towers Elementary School
Tornadoes in OKC Area 1880-2013

When people ask why choose to live in Moore?

Here is the picture shown of past tornadoes impacting entire OKC area.
Tornadoes from last 56 years

When people ask why live in Oklahoma?
My Point?

It happened in my town and it can happen in yours.
Library Response to Community

What we expect from a great library in the aftermath:

- Demonstrate community leadership
- Help with vigils, ceremonies, other public events
- Mission alignment-unity in purpose for partnerships
- Inform and educate the public
- Share resources with agencies
- Outreach to other organizations
- Programs with schools and others
Communicate! All staff accounted for via text and Facebook
Message from Director-within hours letting others know who and extent
Reaching out to Joplin for advice and best practices
Online giving for staff setup-1.5 days
Share message with vendors, other libraries and organizations
Pioneer Library System Staff Response

- Updated Tornado Relief message to Board and others-2 days
- 4 staff impacted becomes 18
- Assistance with finding temporary housing with other staff. Hotels and rentals are full or scarce
- Basic food and clothing needs addressed as possible
Week 1 Response

- Support for paid time off. Do not worry message reinforced daily.
- Staff help each other-debris cleanup, grocery shopping, work at other sites
- Construction company on library project offers to board up staff homes for free
- Clearing house established for offers of outside assistance
- Staff work with insurance companies to assess damage and reopen libraries
- Share process for handling work-damaged materials, library cards-moved or deceased customers
- Staff receive 1<sup>st</sup> gift cards of monetary assistance from donations
During first month and beyond

- Employee Assistance Program info distributed to all staff at Moore and S OKC
- Counselors on site to offer group or individual counseling
- Second round of monetary donations received-Dallas, Wisconsin, Memphis, among many others
- Staff returning to work are encouraged to attend community programs as needed-FEMA Claims, SBA, housing, debris cleanup needs, storage needs etc.
- Staff encouraged to make use of all resources-waived copy and fax fees for filing claims, scanners etc.
- OK Strong independent counselors visit staff meetings
  - Provide education on vicarious stress of helping devastated communities
  - Share ways of recognizing PTSD with fellow staff members

- S OKC and Moore Libraries served 47,585 customers in July

- PLS forgave $11,414.46 in fines and lost materials
Help is best defined by the person receiving it not the person giving it.

Partnership with Vo-tech next door

Debrief each week with staff

Share offers of new help
Search for ways to adapt existing programs to meet new needs

- FINRA/ALA Smart investing @ your library® program. Used grant funds to create six week series for storm survivors
- Resiliency in the Heartland-targeted staff and Oklahoma Disaster Relief clients.
  - How to budget when receiving lump sum insurance payments
  - How to budget when payouts are tied up in courts
  - Addressed the personal relationships impacted by stress and money uncertainty
  - Children’s programs with Art Therapy and Therapy Dogs
Long term Recovery and Support

- Education is Key!
- LARC – partnership with Long-term Area Recovery Committees for unmet needs
- Serve Moore, Emergency Management
- Continued FEMA Certified Training for community leaders
Admin demonstrates support and empathy through words AND actions

- Refined and updated severe weather procedures
- Cancelling of programs under watches
- Staff do not travel off site for programs under certain conditions
- Walkie talkies and improved weather radios at all sites
- Improved communications
- Point of contacts established on severe weather days
- New signage
- New closing and reopening practices
- “Adventure Bags”
Always celebrate successes

- New house showers for staff
- Visit rebuilding sites
- “Daycare van tours example”
- Attend ribbon cuttings
- Recognize anniversaries
- Allow individual staff to grieve and honor their memories in their own way
Staff heal through helping others

Organized cleanup efforts
Clearly identified helpers
Less chaos

Staff rebuild playgrounds through school foundation Nike and Kaboom grants.
School Library Partnership

3 library systems unite September 28, 2013
Over $70,000 raised for school libraries

Dav Pilkey - Captain Underpants
Jeff Kinney - Diary of a Wimpy Kid
Lincoln Pierce - Big Nate
Stephan Pastis - Timmy Failure
Share to build capacity in others -
Giving staff ownership of their stories

- Urban Libraries Council 2014 Top Innovators
  Special Honors-Serving Communities in Crisis
  Recognized for outstanding communication through Virtual Library and FINRA/ALA Financial Literacy trainings on recovering financially and emotionally from crisis

- Oklahoma Library Association Special Projects Award 2014 for support to public school partners through fundraising and volunteerism

- OLA, PLA presentations
My lessons learned.
I cannot control the weather (insert disaster of your choice).

I can only control my response to it.

Stuff is stuff and only people matter.

I choose to be a tornado survivor and NOT a tornado victim.

It is only a part of me not all of me.
We will rebuild. We will recover.
We are Moore Strong. We are OK Strong.

Southmoore HS Marching Band,
Forever Moore Production
Thank you

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