

# FRSTeam in the Community

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*Every day at work, FRSTeam employees focus on supporting and assisting individuals who have experienced some sort of loss. When those same employees leave work they take that compassion and desire to help others out into their communities. Terre Turner tells about her experiences in Joplin, MO following the destructive 2011 tornado.*

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I am Terre Turner, a Job Coordinator for FRSTeam by Fashion Cleaners in Riverside, MO. I was hired by FRSTeam not so long after I experienced a loss of my own. Black Friday took on a whole new meaning for me the day after Thanksgiving of 2010 when my home caught fire.

Following the fire I stayed with my daughter, Kelley, and her family who happen to live across the street from me. On May 22, 2011 as we stood outside watching the storm clouds brewing, a news alert came on the television: Joplin, MO had been hit by a frightening F5 tornado. The news devastated my daughter and me both. As Kelley attempted to contact people she knew in Joplin, we were also brainstorming about how we could help those who had lost everything! A few days later we sent a care package to Joplin - knowing in our hearts that it was not nearly enough! We began gathering more donations and searching for other ways to help. We found a newly formed group via Facebook which provided survivors with a place to note their specific needs. We joined and became administrators for the group which quickly grew to over 1000 survivors and donors.

We made our first trip to Joplin just two weeks after the tornado with a trailer loaded down with donations for the survivors. We also purchased snacks, drinks and first aid items for distribution to volunteers who were helping to clean up the tornado zone. We knew from the pictures and video we had seen that experiencing the devastation in person would be difficult. So in hopes of minimizing how much we could see, we



intentionally left our little town of Agency, MO late Friday and arrived after dark in Joplin. This was our “ice breaker” as we called it. Despite the dark we were overwhelmed by the smell and

debris as we drove through Joplin at around 10:00 pm. No picture or video can ever prepare one for what we saw firsthand.

Early the next morning we made deliveries to all those we had “adopted”. We then went to the “red zone” and talked with volunteers and families working to clean up. We gave out snacks and cold drinks to those working while we shot video and photos and heard some unbelievable stories. Of course we knew immediately that this was just the first of our visits to Joplin. Since then, I have made several more trips to Joplin, even spending the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Labor Day holidays in Joplin. I have been volunteering with a variety of groups, and am currently working with one group to help provide Thanksgiving baskets and another that will be hosting a Christmas event in Joplin.

Most recently, Extreme Makeover Home Edition selected 7 Joplin families to rebuild for in 7 days!! Two of the families selected had also been part of the Facebook group. I submitted a volunteer request to Extreme Makeover and was selected to be a volunteer for day one, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, I came down with a stomach virus and was unable to attend. I then sent in a reschedule request though when I did not receive a response I decided it was just not meant to be.



The following Monday night, as I sat working on yet another project for Joplin, I received an email explaining that Extreme Makeover needed an additional 200 volunteers for Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 am to 8:00 am. I was overwhelmed with excitement as I immediately replied that I was ready and willing! An hour later I received my official confirmation. Being chosen for this

date is thrilling as this is the final build date and the first reveal will be done during my shift and aired live on Good Morning America! As I write this, my heart is filled with so much joy and excitement for the people of Joplin. I have made many friends along this journey and countless residents have left footprints on my heart!

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of July I was finally able to return to my own home. As I look at the many boxes still waiting to be unpacked and the many other tasks on my ‘to do list’ I have to acknowledge that I have pushed my own needs aside to help others. And I am happy to have done it! Nothing helps you value what you have more than focusing on those that are worse off. My experiences in Joplin have changed my life and I will continue helping survivors rebuild their lives for as long as it takes.