



Operation Rising Eagle

The story of *hope* continues...



Joplin Schools

Joplin Schools, One Year Later

Remembrance • Resilience • Recovery

The EF-5 tornado struck Joplin, MO on May 22, 2011 just after the high school graduating class received their diplomas and were heading home. A clock at the destroyed high school was forever frozen at 5:40 p.m. In all, 161 people were killed and over 900 injured. One-third of the town was destroyed including 8,000-plus homes and businesses. The 220-plus mph winds hoisted cars into the air as the churning debris pulverized everything in its path. In the Joplin School District, seven students and one staff member died. Half of the district's buildings were damaged or destroyed including the only high school. Over 3,200 students lost their classrooms. The nation turned its unblinking eye on a seven-mile long, one-mile wide strip of destruction, death and despair. Joplin's darkest night had begun.

From tragedy to hope

Within hours of the tornado, the story changed from tragedy to hope. Neighbors helped neighbors. Joplin residents united in rescue and recovery efforts. And, thousands of volunteers from across the world poured in to lend a hand. At Joplin Schools, bus drivers instinctively came to their bus barn though no one called them in. They drove school buses used as ambulances throughout the night and the following day to save lives. For days, teams of employees from Joplin Schools walked unidentifiable streets calling out the names of students until they accounted for every child. Just days after the tornado, Joplin Schools Superintendent Dr. CJ Huff improbably announced Joplin Schools would start on time, an announcement that galvanized the entire community with a common goal.

Summer school started on time and was extended to give parents a chance to regroup and kids a chance to experience some sense of "normalcy." Throughout the summer, construction crews worked overtime to prepare temporary schools for students including a school in a warehouse in an industrial park and a school in a shopping mall. And as promised, on August 17, just 86 days after the tornado, school started on time.

An unforgettable school year

An outpouring of support from across the nation and world helped Joplin Schools meet student and staff needs. Joplin will never forget the 1,000 volunteers that were in the city the week before school started putting furniture together, painting, and helping teachers organize classrooms. Every student received a backpack filled with school supplies to start the year.

Year in Review

Joplin EF-5 Tornado

May 22, 2011

An EF-5 tornado rips through Joplin damaging or destroying 10 of 20 Joplin Schools buildings.



Dr. Huff declares school will start on time

May 24, 2011

Joplin Schools Superintendent Dr. Huff announces to the public that Joplin Schools will start on time.



Summer School

June 13 - July 29

Summer school begins on time and extends in length to help parents in the recovery process.



Opening Day

Aug. 15, 2011

Hundreds from the community welcome teachers & staff of Joplin Schools to their opening day meeting.



First day of school

Aug. 17, 2011

School begins on time for all students, including launch of JHS one-to-one laptop initiative.



First home football game

Sept. 10, 2011

Thousands of Eagle fans fill the stadium to cheer on the football team for their first home game.



Every high school student received a new laptop through a generous donation from the United Arab Emirates. Over the holiday break, the district was able to host a Winter Camp, giving students a safe and fun place to spend their time. Mental health programs were implemented throughout the district to help students, staff and parents. Compassionate people from across the country have made an entire school year special: the first home football game, an opportunity to play at Arrowhead Stadium, Homecoming with entertainment by an American Idol, a magical and virtually free Prom, and the President speaking at graduation.

Moving forward together

One year later, President Barack Obama is coming to deliver the 2012 Commencement Address. The school district is breaking ground on four new schools after passing a \$62 million bond with a 57.68 percent “Yes” vote. On May 22, 2012 more than 5,000 people are expected to take part in a 4-mile “Walk of Unity” following the tornado’s path. Along the way, they will hoist a new steeple on a rebuilt church, shovel dirt for new schools, and reclaim land once scarred by the tornado.

“The thousands of volunteers and good wishes that poured in from around the country coupled with our visits to schools in so many different states to learn best practices in education have had a profound effect on us. From Florida to Washington State, people started school with us, attended our first football game, joined us at Prom and now they will join the President in celebrating our graduation. We feel like we are becoming America’s School District.”

– Dr. CJ Huff, Joplin Schools Superintendent

In the days and weeks after the tornado, major media outlets picked up the “Joplin Can Do Survival Spirit” and spread word across the country that something special was happening here. A desire to keep moving forward permeates the town and its schools. Dr. Huff said Joplin Schools would come back on two fronts. First they would take care of their students and staff. Second, they would improve learning and rebuild schools better than they were. It all is coming to pass. The Wall Street Journal suggested Joplin’s unprecedented rebirth is a tribute to a city decision to give individual citizens more freedom in rebuilding their town. People here will say it is Midwestern gumption and deeply held core values that make the difference. Whatever it is that makes Joplin’s story so unique, one thing is certain: there is a new glue that holds the people of this Southwest Missouri town together. Joplin is not done changing or growing and the Joplin story will continue.

Homecoming	Winter Camp	Bond Passing	Prom	Graduation	Groundbreakings
<p>Oct. 7, 2011</p> <p>American Idol winner David Cook performs for the JHS Homecoming dance.</p> 	<p>Dec. 21-30, 2011</p> <p>Joplin Schools hosts a free 7-day camp for Kindergarten through 12th graders over winter break.</p> 	<p>April 3, 2012</p> <p>Voters pass a \$62 million bond request with 57.68% to help rebuild schools.</p> 	<p>April 21, 2012</p> <p>Dozens of volunteers and sponsors create a magical and virtually free Prom for students.</p> 	<p>May 21, 2012</p> <p>President Barack Obama delivers commencement address to the Class of 2012.</p> 	<p>May 22, 2012</p> <p>Joplin Schools marks the one-year anniversary of the tornado with groundbreakings for new schools.</p> 

With your help, brighter days ahead

The new story for Joplin Schools is filled with thanksgiving. Two statistics stand out:

- *By January 1, 2012 over 30,000 documented volunteer hours had been contributed to the school district.*
- *Donations to Joplin Schools now top \$7 million.*

Fortunately for Joplin, the volunteers and donations continue to come in. Joplin and the school district still need this support.

Today in Joplin, almost all of the rubble has been cleared and a bright future is forming. Trees once stripped bare have new growth. The sound of hammers has replaced the sound of sirens. There is also progress on the education front. School administrators believe teaching and learning may have jumped ahead by as much as seven years because of learning innovations made by teachers and students. The high school replaced textbooks with new donated laptop computers. The district is moving forward with plans for a career pathways approach to learning. Innovative thinkers are free to explore ideas like an “employability grade” in things like attendance, being on time, getting work completed –the skills that students will actually be graded on in the real work world. One year later, Joplin and its schools have an unmistakable sense of community, pride and optimism.

Joplin Schools thanks you for caring so much. We invite you again to join us in creating a school system that will be a model for the nation. Learn more about Joplin Schools and how you can be a part of our story at www.joplinschools.org.

One year later – lessons learned from our students:

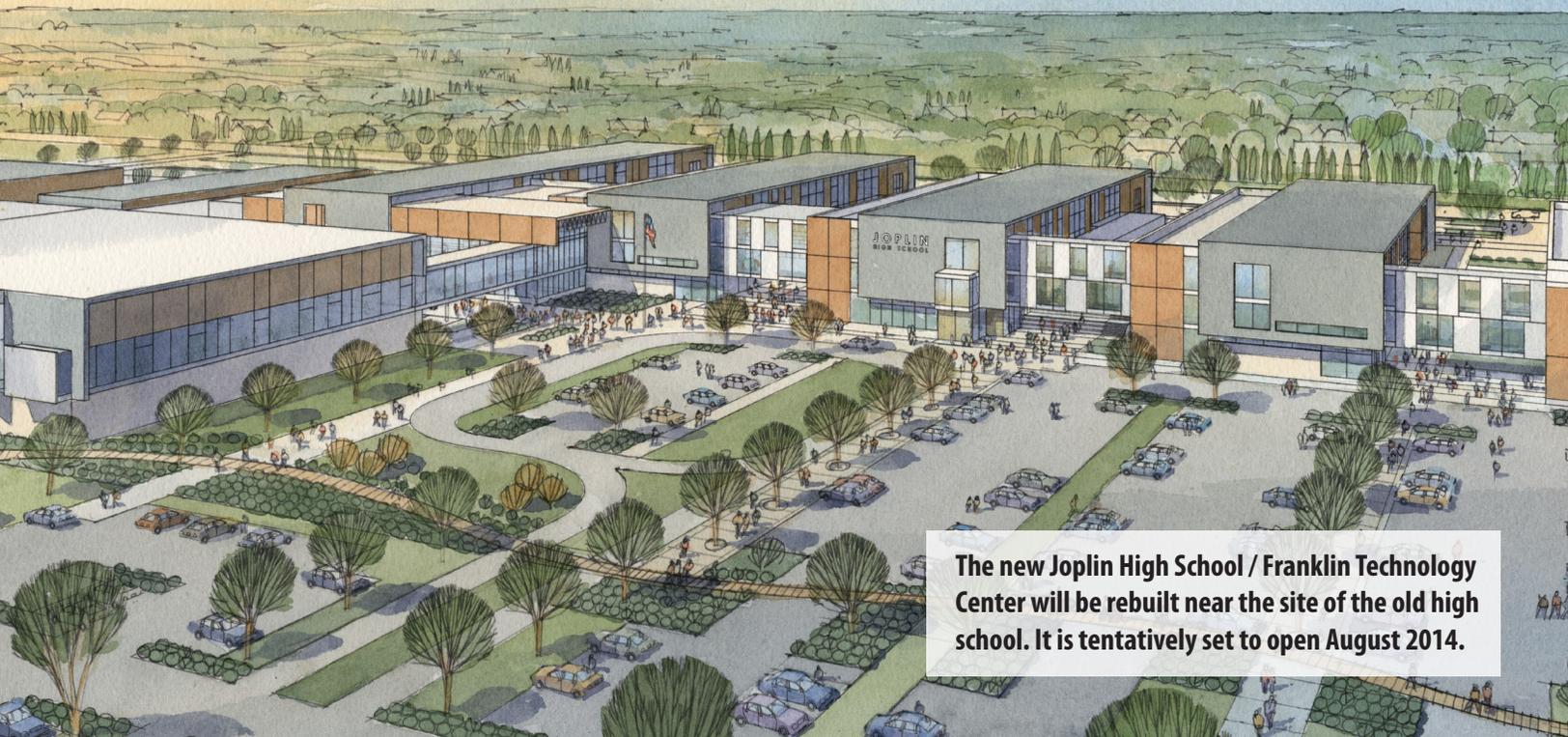
“A high school girl came to the first day of school wearing a skirt. This is a big deal because her leg is badly scarred from the tornado. She decided not to listen to those who said she should wear pants.”

“A student, asked by a reporter if she feels cheated out of her senior year by going to school in a mall, replied, ‘We made great memories at 2104 Indiana; but, you know what, we are going to make new and better memories in our new school.’”

“The 2012 Joplin High School Prom King lives his life with Downs Syndrome. The Prom Queen, a star athlete, wore her first dress, ever, the night of Prom.”

“A fourth grade student whose family was hard hit by the tornado tells an interviewer filming a documentary that he is not a victim. ‘The 161 people who died are the victims. I have a life.’”

New Joplin High School / Franklin Technology Center



The new Joplin High School / Franklin Technology Center will be rebuilt near the site of the old high school. It is tentatively set to open August 2014.