



# OKLAHOMA CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

*Helping you help the community*

## **The Oklahoma Tornadoes and Flooding of May 2013: A Recovery Update**

February 1, 2014

When central Oklahoma experienced the destructive tornadoes, storms and flooding over a 12-day period in May 2013, donors both local and across the country responded with an incredible amount of generosity.

The immediate needs of those directly impacted were addressed by local, state and national government agencies as well as churches, nonprofit organizations and volunteer groups. The American Red Cross and United Way of Central Oklahoma assumed leadership of the response from day one and continue to play pivotal roles in the intermediate recovery efforts.

The Oklahoma City Community Foundation's Tornado Recovery Fund and Community Emergency Fund were originally established following the devastating tornado that struck central Oklahoma in 1999. We reactivated the funds within hours following the May 20, 2013 tornado. We were humbled by the quantity of gifts that were directed to these funds and very much appreciate all of the donors who reached out to help. Individuals, families, businesses and foundations together contributed nearly \$1 million to the two funds. We are committed to utilizing 100 percent of the gifts made to both funds.

What we are hearing from those who are providing these direct services is first, gratitude to donors such as yourself who gave so generously. Your generosity is helping to fund the collaboration among nonprofit organizations, ensuring their impact is at its greatest. Also, that your charitable gifts given nearly nine months ago are helping with the healing. And finally, that we are in this for the long haul.

We're pleased to provide you with the following update on the activities supported to date by the two funds.

**The Tornado Recovery Fund** is helping to meet intermediate recovery needs of those directly impacted and will be available when other assistance is no longer available to meet the long-term recovery efforts. Our experience with disaster recovery tells us that dealing with mental health issues will be a long-term need. These storms impacted school children, teachers, school administrators, parents and first responders. The Tornado Recovery Fund has supported mental and physical health services including case managers through grants to the following nonprofit organizations:

- Moore Youth & Family Services – is supervising the outreach efforts in the Moore Public Schools district. Mental health professionals must be invited into a classroom to begin providing assessment and services. In the fall of 2013, 219 students were served, mostly elementary and mid-high classes. Following the holiday break, a total of 34 classes are receiving assistance. In all, there are 17 mental health professionals that are available in the schools to provide emotional support when needed.
- Sunbeam Family Services – a grant funds a case manager position to facilitate assistance for families who either experienced a death in the family or injuries as a result of the storms. Assistance includes paying prescription and doctor co-pays and insurance deductibles. We anticipate that once FEMA assistance is exhausted, this need will increase. The nonprofit organization has also reached out to Oklahoma City's Asian community to educate them on what services are available to anyone impacted by the May storms.

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- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City – a grant to increase number of bilingual mental health counselors and case managers available to serve non-English speaking individuals impacted by the storms. A language barrier may have resulted in confusion with storm notifications and where to seek shelter. Catholic Charities is working with Spanish broadcast stations in providing outreach and address the lack of knowledge among Latino families regarding storm preparation. The organization is also working with Latino day care centers to reach families impacted and assist with accessing services. Case managers are also helping non-English speaking survivors access FEMA assistance and other social services.
- City of Moore – Little River Park, a 52-acre public park located near Plaza Towers Elementary School that took a direct hit by the May 20 tornado, had severe damage and tree loss. Prior to the storm, the park featured a walking trail, picnic areas and playground equipment and was a very popular site for neighborhood families. Our staff is working with the City of Moore Parks Department to replenish the trees.

Through the **Community Emergency Fund** we were able to address several needs soon after the storms impacted the area:

- Easter Seals Oklahoma's building was severely damaged by the May 31 flooding and was unable to serve its clientele. The nonprofit organization assists children who have all types of disabilities to gain the greatest level of independence possible. We were able to assist with the clean-up costs, allowing the organization to reassume operations much faster than anticipated.
- The Crutchko Public School, located in northeast Oklahoma County, lost all of its band instruments in the flooding. We were able to replace all of the instruments lost from cymbals to tubas.

### **Beyond Granting Dollars**

In addition to the grants, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation has also played a role in helping to convene nonprofit organizations to encourage collaboration and understand the process of recovering from such devastating events:

- On June 13, 2013, we hosted a meeting of 30 staff representing nonprofit organizations in central Oklahoma that provide mental health services and case managers as well as staff from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health to begin sharing what services were being provided and to identify the mental health needs of those directly impacted. The agencies present were: Latino Community Development Agency, Community Health Centers, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, Sunbeam Family Services, Moore Youth and Family Services, National Alliance on Mental Illness Oklahoma, Red Rock Behavioral Services, NorthCare, Save the Children and Heartline 211.
- At the request of FEMA Region 6 representatives, we hosted a forum on July 25, 2013 and invited representatives of organizations and foundations in the area that were interested in providing support for the recovery efforts. FEMA wanted the opportunity to explain the steps and process the agency utilizes in response to disasters.
- In addition, our staff continues to participate in the Long-Term Recovery Committees that include service providers, nonprofit organizations, FEMA, the American Red Cross and public officials. These committees meet weekly to assess the recovery needs of impacted individuals and areas.

Again, thank you for your contribution. Recovery will continue and the role of community-based agencies and nonprofit organizations will increase as FEMA and other government support withdraws. We will continue to keep donors and the public informed and aware as emerging needs arise.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact us at 405/235-5603 or [info@occf.org](mailto:info@occf.org).