

The final day of our Joplin adventure began with a cold wind and occasional rain. We prepared a hearty breakfast of bacon and eggs for our hostel mates from John Knox Presbyterian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The facilities were quite comfortable with about 20 people living together in a dormitory setting. We were able to cook our meals, wash our clothes and spend the evenings in stimulating conversation or just relaxing with our reading material. Unfortunately there were only 3 bridge players among the group. We are grateful that the Joplin churches have opened their doors to the volunteers that are arriving weekly from all across the nation.

Catholic charities personnel were, as always, extremely competent in organizing our work assignments. You have read descriptions of the jobs we completed throughout the week and met some of the good people of Joplin who we met and who depend on volunteers to make their homes livable again. Most of the home owners are very grateful for our help and are themselves involved in assisting neighbors and family with the difficult adjustments that will be ongoing for many years in the future. Joplin appears to be a very close knit community and we feel right at home and connected with the families we meet on these trips. It is rewarding to go back and visit some of the homes where we have worked in the past and to experience bits of return to normalcy in the midst of the destruction.

In very rare occasions we encounter a client who is less than enthusiastic about the quality of work done by the volunteers. In these cases the volunteers may have been assigned jobs for which they were not qualified, or they have started a job and failed to complete the work. The home owner may have to wait some time before volunteers appear that can correct or complete the job. One cannot blame the home owner for viewing the volunteers more like a paid contractor who does a shoddy job. In some cases they may have been victims of scams by contractors, as well as poor work by volunteers.

This is one of the reasons our Westminster Disaster Recovery Team is very conscientious about the work we do and always make certain the owner is satisfied before we leave the job. Many of the assignments we take are to complete or repair work that other volunteers were unable to accomplish. We are fortunate to have in our group engineers and builders who know how to do whatever work is assigned. They are gifted in many skills that elude even professionals in the construction business. But the final step in completing the job in Joplin is to take the time to explain what we are trying to do and to listen to the stories of those for whom we have come to help. We always try to leave a satisfied customer.

Mark your calendars for August 18, 2013 to join us on our fifth mission to Joplin.