

Boots on the Ground in Moore, Oklahoma

Your Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Team in Action

They traveled by plane, by car and in travel trailer – twenty hardy souls from Presbyterian Church of the Master arrived in Oklahoma City on April 5. Assigned to the suburb of Moore, team members never have much information about what they're in for – but every one of them knew the need: Moore, Oklahoma was the scene of two devastating tornadoes that swept across Oklahoma a year ago spreading destruction and havoc. Within thirty seconds, winds of 295 mph smashed homes, businesses, shopping centers, roads, schools, and playgrounds in a 2.6 mile wide swath. Twenty-two fatalities were caused by the storms.



PCOM's 2014 Disaster Relief Project Team worked through the United Methodist Church Disaster Response Project and other nonprofit organizations including the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), Salvation Army, Red Cross, Catholic Charities, and St. Vincent De Paul for ongoing storm recovery and home reconstruction projects in Moore, OK and surrounding communities.



The process to obtain disaster assistance requires that storm victims apply for assistance. The Oklahoma Disaster Recovery team evaluates applications, verifies requests are storm-related and confirms that each recipient has financial need requiring aid. Once an application is confirmed and approved it is submitted to a funding panel for allocation of monies. When funded the projects are assigned to volunteer teams based on team availability and their skill capabilities.



Our PCOM 2014 Oklahoma Project Team contributed over 700 man-hours of volunteer labor. Our team of twenty was divided into two crews of 10. One crew deconstructed and cleared two seriously damaged mobile homes in preparation for housing replacement in the McCloud neighborhood. The other team was assigned to install a 650 foot chain link fence in nearby Newalla, which involved clearing brush and debris, digging 75 post holes and cementing the posts.

That chain link fence was a challenge: Team Leader Dwight battled for hours to remove a huge tree stump so that the fence could be straight. Pastor Dee tackled the auger for post-hole digging (with a little help from Dwight); Tom managed to break a shovel on the hard earth, and Rick took a multitude of pictures throughout the week. On the last work day, Construction Lead Neil combined the two teams to complete the chain link fence installation, build a single three foot walk-through and also a drive-through double gate.

Not everything was work - several beautiful quilts were sent with the Team by PCOM's Comforters. These lovingly hand-crafted quilts were gifted to families whose homes were the team work sites. The Greenson family received a beautiful maroon quilt (as it turned out – her favorite color). Another quilt was given to a mother/daughter family. Julie organized the Team's excursion to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum which everyone enjoyed. Sandy planned delicious meals: Barbecued Chicken, Beef Stroganoff, Savory Meatloaf and even "Taco Mountain" – all prepared by the hands of many helpers.



The team was composed of PCOM members and friends from across a wide spectrum of talents, personalities and ages.

We are grateful to the Lord for a safe trip for everyone, no accidents, much work, much blessing – team members always return feeling their blessings are greater than those they traveled to help. However, none of this week's work would have happened without the time and treasure given by members and friends of PCOM; we thank you all for your generosity.

This Story of Hope was written by Cinda Slate to share the work team's story with their congregation. Photos by Rick Finnegan, team member.