



On April 28, 2011 Missouri Southern State University and the American Red Cross (ARC) announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to cooperate in disaster preparation using MSSU facilities. See the story at <http://www.mssu.edu/news/2011/april/mou-red-cross.php> .

Little did the University know that only a few days later MSSU would be called into action to assist the ARC, several state and federal agencies, and other nonprofit organizations in a major natural disaster.

MSSU facilities were called into action with dozens of staff and thousands of volunteers leaving their Sunday evening routines to enter a world savaged by the devastating tornado.

- The Leggett & Platt Athletic Center that sheltered up to about 400 people per night (and their pets) displaced by the EF-5 tornado ripping through one of the most populated areas and major retail centers in the region. The facility providing housing for about 3,000 total overnight stays.
- The new Health Sciences Building, which just opened in the fall of 2010 (see story here <http://www2.mssu.edu/news/2010/healthscienceopening2010.html>), was placed into action as a "Surge Medical Clinic" and dental care facility after Mercy (then St. John's Regional Medical Center) took a direct hit by the tornado. The MSSU facility became a 28-bed hospital and was used for several days before Mercy regained full services at Memorial Hall, and other Urgent Care and Express Care services by Mercy and Freeman Hospital were able to treat all levels of patients. Many dentist offices were destroyed. More 1,000 people were treated in the triage center before it closed.
- Billingsly Student Center, including the Beimdiek Recreation Center and the Willcoxon Student Health Center, became the center of volunteer organization efforts managed by AmeriCorps. About 10,000 volunteers from across the nation had registered as of Memorial Day. By May 10, 2012, more than 130,000 volunteers provided 810,476.5 hours of service from all reporting organizations and agencies. Details from the City of Joplin are available at www.joplintonniversary.com . MSSU's student center also served as temporary barracks for President Barack Obama's military advance group, a missing persons call center and the D-MORT disaster morgue processing center for DNA analysis by the State Department of Public Safety.
- Taylor Performing Arts Center and the University's Fine Arts Complex became the center of activity for FEMA, the Missouri National Guard operations center and Gov. Jay Nixon's Community Resource Meetings that pulled together numerous state agencies and services to assist disaster victims - including disaster unemployment assistance, temporary housing and temporary food stamp services.

- The University's residence halls were used to house hundreds of police, fire and rescue teams pouring into the area to assist. University contracted food service provider, Sodexo, took over feeding the rescue workers and the ARC shelter clients and many other volunteer workers. MSSU Physical Plant staff turned the residence hall rooms twice a day for two weeks to house two shifts of first responders. Sodexo served nearly 74,000 thousands meals, on campus for the rescue workers, the Red Cross shelter and off-campus functions.
- Taylor Auditorium also served as the location for a Memorial Service on May 29, 2011 hosted by Gov. Nixon. President Obama also spoke to victims and their families, area clergy and community leaders. About 10,000 people were drawn to campus for that service held in Taylor Performing Arts Center. Overflow facilities with video feeds from TPAC were provided in Corley Auditorium in Webster Hall and outside at the campus tennis courts.
- Physical Plant facilities were used to store tons of goods people brought to help the victims shortly after the disaster. Semi tractor-trailers, pickups, cars, vans - just about anything on wheels - brought food, water, toiletries, mattresses and other necessities to campus in the hours and days after the disaster.
- The University, like so many other organizations and businesses, was trying to account for its own employees and students, two perished in the storm (faculty member Jose Alvarez and student Abraham H. (Abe) Khoury, Joplin, (a Business and Entrepreneurship major), and another staff member lost her spouse (Beth Lansaw lost her husband, Don, 31, who covered her in the storm to save her life), and yet another, Cindy Jordan, was severely injured and taken to a Springfield hospital with severe injuries after she was thrown or sucked out of her vehicle caught in the center of the tornado. Her husband was in the same vehicle, but sustained only minor injuries. More than 120 others (employees and students) from MSSU lost their homes or apartments and their belongings.
- Beginning the third week following the tornado, the University began making arrangements with organizations planning benefit programs and additional relief efforts. The U.S. Tennis Association requested space for a traveling interactive display. The USTA SmashZone made a special stop in Joplin on June 30 at the Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) campus. The stop offered a glimpse of 10 and Under Tennis to the community of Joplin in an effort to boost the spirits of the children and families affected by the May 22 tornado. Branson entertainer Yakov Smirnov produced a benefit program with several national entertainers on Tuesday, July 19. The Missouri House of Representatives Interim Committee on Disaster Recovery conducted a special hearing on Monday, June 27 in Corley Auditorium in Webster Hall, and another Missouri Senate Interim Committee on Natural Disaster Recovery Subcommittee on Insurance Response was scheduled on campus for Aug. 3. University staff began working with Jeff Parness, Founder and Chairman of New York Says Thank You Foundation and the National 9-11 Flag (national911flag.org) for the Sept. 9, 2011 program being organized on campus. The University also communicated with the Jumbalaya Festival Association, which came to Joplin to serve meals for three weeks after the disaster. "After Katrina, we didn't want people to forget recovery takes time. We were determined not to let that happen in Joplin," an organizer stated.

- The University's Athletics Department hosted major disaster recovery fundraisers, *One State, One Spirit* and *I-44 Hoops Classic*, supported by Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon, the University of Missouri and Missouri State University. The October and November exhibition games raised more than \$100,000 to support the Joplin recovery effort.
- The Missouri Southern State University Small Business & Technology Development Center and the Missouri Southern Heartland Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) has supported the recovery effort by assisting businesses and collaborating with the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce and Cities of Joplin and Duquesne.