



Photo by Laurelee Koziol

JOPLIN PREPARES THE “WHOLE COMMUNITY” THROUGH DISASTER PLANNING ASSISTANCE

No community understands the importance of preparing its citizens for emergencies more than Joplin, Missouri, which was devastated by an EF5 tornado on May 22, 2011. Displaced individuals with chronic conditions and special needs were hit particularly hard. However, thanks to The Independent Living Center (TILC), Joplin’s citizens are better prepared for any future disasters.

TILC is a private, non-residential, not-for-profit corporation devoted to meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities. TILC’s work embodies the Whole Community approach to emergency management by integrating the needs, capabilities, and resources of the community. Due to the tornado, many people with chronic conditions lost their prescription medications, and doctor’s offices and pharmacies lost the written prescriptions. To prevent this in the future, TILC built a cloud source option for online prescription storage. This system provides people a place to access their prescriptions in case of another catastrophic incident. TILC has also raised awareness of those with special needs in the community through first responder and volunteer training opportunities. From October 2012 through January 2013, TILC provided three trainings to 98 attendees. In addition, TILC assists individuals with special needs to develop emergency plans and provides emergency preparedness tools.

In 2012, FEMA, the CDC Foundation, and PPHR selected TILC as a promising example of the Whole Community approach to emergency management. TILC has assisted 211 individuals in developing emergency and disaster plans with positive results. In early 2013, a TILC survey showed that 98% of respondents reported they feel more prepared for emergencies as a result of TILC’s disaster planning assistance.