Hello!

This newsletter, the third in our series, provides updates on our latest visits to our two field sites: Joplin, Missouri and Slave Lake, Alberta. The Youth Creating Disaster Recovery (YCDR) project has been moving steadily forward, and as always, we appreciate your thoughts, comments, and insights! Thanks in advance for reading this newsletter!

Joplin Workshops

The YCDR team traveled to Joplin from June 10-15, 2013, to host a series of creative workshops with youth. The goal of the workshops was to invite high school students to use creative methods to explore disaster recovery. In addition, we worked together to brainstorm ways that youth can reach out to other disaster affected communities.

Over four days, we worked with 13 students who participated in 1-2 workshop sessions. These included team building and trust exercises, photo exploration activities, photo and video story production, and several other creative methods designed to evoke discussion regarding youth recovery after the Joplin tornado.

We were so impressed by the enthusiasm, courage, wisdom, and creativity of the youth who participated. While each person contributed a unique perspective to the project, adding to the depth and complexity of disaster recovery for youth, there were also many common and powerful threads in the stories we heard.

MACKENZIE reading a poem that she wrote about recovery from the Joplin tornado. Her poem titled “Recovering” was published by her teacher, Randy Turner, in his book Scars.

ZACH playing a beautiful song that he composed following the Joplin tornado. His song is titled “Like a Phoenix.”

ALEXANDRA choosing a photo during a visual explorer activity that uses images to answer a specific question. During this session we asked, “What does it mean to be a youth in Joplin?”
Slave Lake Updates

In addition to our research in Joplin, we are also working in the community of Slave Lake, Alberta, in Canada. In May 2011, just one week prior to the Joplin tornado, Slave Lake experienced a devastating wildfire that destroyed a third of their city. This May, we made our first trip to Slave Lake to speak with young people as well as adults about the immediate and longer-term effects of the disaster. We are already seeing many parallels between the stories we heard from youth and adult leaders in Slave Lake and the stories we have heard from those in Joplin.

KEY THEMES

During the workshops we conducted in Joplin, we gathered audio and video recordings as well as photographs to document the daily sessions. We are still in the process of organizing and analyzing all the data we collected, but some key themes have emerged:

1. It is clear that youth have the capacity to help their community during and after a disaster. They also have a great desire to help youth in other communities who have experienced a disaster.

2. Young people are creative and passionate. It is important to open up spaces for them to express themselves in the ways that are most comfortable for them.

3. Young people who survived the 2011 Joplin tornado have experienced many changes in their lives—some difficult, others quite positive. The impacts of the tornado continue to unfold during the recovery period, but the youth have found creative ways to adapt and respond.

4. Joplin youth have used music, writing, and art to process their experiences of the 2011 tornado. They continue to look for ways to share their stories and insights with peers and the larger community.
Workshop Activities

On the second day of the workshop, participants brought in their own photos to tell the story of disaster recovery. This photo shows AUSTIN pointing to an image of a playground that was destroyed in the Joplin tornado.

This “Magic Carpet Ride” activity encouraged participants to work together to creatively flip the tarp over while keeping any person from falling off. It is amazing what can be accomplished with team work!

Special Thanks

YMCA

We were fortunate to partner with the Joplin YMCA to host our June Workshops. The YMCA is committed to building strong kids, strong families, and strong communities through two facilities in Joplin, serving approximately 12,700 members and approximately 1,000 program participants per year. Through the ongoing youth development programs, the Joplin Y nurtures the potential of every child and teen.

As we prepared for our workshops, we joined together with Kimberley Gray, Cookie Estrada, Amber Morris, and the rest of the team at the Joplin Y to plan many of the logistical details. Upon our arrival, they were such generous and giving hosts. Their support of the project and of the young people in Joplin is remarkable and they deserve recognition for their hard work and dedication. Thank you!

To learn more about the programs that the Y offers, please visit: http://www.joplinfamilyy.org/index.php/youth-development

Spiva Center for the Arts

We could not leave Joplin without visiting the George A. Spiva Center for the Arts! During our last day in Joplin, we met with Jo Mueller, Karalee McDonald, and Josie Mai. They informed us of the many creative outreach programs they have done with young people since the tornado. In fact, soon after the tornado they engaged children in a photo story activity to help them express their feelings about the disaster. These amazing stories and photographs were then displayed at Spiva for the community to view. What an inspiring team of individuals! Their passion and enthusiasm for bringing art into the community of Joplin is unparalleled.

If you would like to learn more about Spiva, please visit: http://www.spivaarts.org
THANK YOU

We would like to say thank you to all of the inspiring young people who participated in the workshops and courageously shared their stories. We are so grateful for the time you committed to this project and for your continued support. You each add such a unique contribution to the world and we are proud to have you as part of our YCDR team.

Next Steps

Given that the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery project is youth-led, we asked the young people at the workshops what they would like to do during our next visit to Joplin. They offered many fantastic ideas and came to the conclusion that the YCDR team would work together to share their own stories publicly, as well as to encourage others to do the same. As such, we plan to work with local partners to design a community event that will showcase the ideas and stories generated by youth thus far and create a public “Photo Booth” in Joplin, where young people can bring a picture, bring a friend, and tell a story about their recovery. Look for more information about this in our next newsletter update!

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PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS
Volume 1, Issue 1:
http://disaster.colostate.edu/joplin-newsletter.aspx

Volume 1, Issue 2:
http://disaster.colostate.edu/slave-lake-newsletter.aspx

FUNDING SUPPORT
The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) provided funding for the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery Project. SSHRC is a Canadian government research funding agency that promotes and supports world-leading postsecondary-based research and training initiatives in the humanities and social sciences. Learn more at: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/home-accueil-eng.aspx

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