

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

Tornado season



Thursday, May 16 was a dark morning. It was still overcast when the sun came up, and there was a palpable sense of foreboding as residents of Granbury, Texas, waited to see the damage daylight would reveal.

The night before, a series of storms moved across north Texas, producing several tornados in the process. One made a path through the small town I have called home for the past two years.

At the boarding school I work at outside Granbury, the weather that Wednesday night wasn't unusual. I was working in a residence of high school girls, and it was only by chance that we saw the weather report when we turned on the TV to watch "So You Think You Can Dance."

By that time, a banner at the bottom of the screen was already telling of a tornado that touched down in a neighborhood a couple miles north of us, and grapefruit-size hail had been spotted to the northwest.

The forecaster warned that a tornado was traveling east of us toward an adjacent city. Looking at the radar map, it seemed impossible that mayhem was happening all around us yet we were seeing nothing.

Concerned, I opened the blinds, looking out the windows on each side of the house, looking for evidence that a storm was heading our way.

About that time, I started receiving texts from a coworker who was in lockdown at Wal-Mart, taking cover from the storm. I began checking in with friends to make sure everyone was safe, and I kept my phone nearby, waiting for a call from my boss to evacuate the students to the

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dining center basement.

As I'm the adult of the house, the students looked to me for answers. "Miss Brandt, are we going to be OK? Is a tornado coming this way?"

I'm not unfamiliar with tornado drills, watches and warnings, but this was the first time my actions weren't dictated by a teacher or parent. These days it is my responsibility to direct the kids in these situations, and that's a whole different experience.

Thankfully, it soon became clear that our school was out of danger, and the girls went on to bed. By that time, they were more concerned about the next day of school than the tornado that had touched down so close to home.

It was then that another thunderstorm came toward town, pelting rain against the windows and lighting up the sky. Knowing the incoming storm would hinder evacuations and searches that lasted into the night, I anxiously followed the progress on the news and via social media.

When morning came, I went to work in an elementary girls' residence. At breakfast they told me they had reviewed tornado safety the night before. I then had the sobering experience of telling them that a tornado had, in fact, touched down in our community.

Five- and 6-year-olds grasp the gravity of a situation when houses are knocked down and people have died, even if they don't understand the disaster itself.

In the week since the Granbury tornado, the news has already been full of coverage of other devastating tornados in Kansas and Oklahoma. In some cases, people have hardly had time to process their loss before they receive threat of another tornado.

Many communities, including my own, have a long recovery process ahead of them. I know I don't have to tell the folks of Phillips County that tornado season can be a dangerous and

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unpredictable time, but I will say I think we can learn from how children respond to these tragedies.

They have sympathy for everyone affected by the tornados, no questions asked. My sweet first-grader told me that she hopes she can help people in tornados when she grows up. Together, they prayed for both victims and the doctors helping them.

Little ones seem to understand that whether it's lost loved ones, injuries, ruined belongings or a loud and frightening close call, a disaster like this can be a trying time for everyone. They were surprisingly sincere in their gratitude for all the things they still have to be thankful for.

No, it shouldn't take a natural disaster for people to be considerate of others and thankful for all they have, but I'll take the opportunity to heed the unfortunate reminder.

Holyoke Enterprise May 23, 2013