



Nichols Hills E-News

May 2013

CITY NEWS

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Upcoming Meetings

- City Council Meeting
June 11th
5:30 pm at City Hall
- Regular Meeting of Municipal Authority
June 11th
5:30 pm at City Hall
- Board of Adjustment
June 19th
5:30 pm at City Hall
- Environmental, Health & Sustainability Committee
June 26th
8:30 am at City Hall

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On May 20th, shortly after 3 pm, an EF5 tornado struck Moore, Oklahoma. At 3:45 pm, a message was sent out across the statewide teletype system:

To: All Search and Rescue Teams

Ref: Tornado in Moore

We need all available search and rescue teams to the Warren Theater to set up triage for the victims of the Moore Tornado.

First Responders from Nichols Hills went immediately into action. The Police Department sent nine first responders over the course of 3 days. Officers took part in search and rescue, security, and even traffic directions. They assisted with whatever task they were requested. The PD also sent a 9-1-1 dispatcher to help Moore PD with their extremely heavy call volume.

Fire Dept. members Roger Straka, Wayne Knight, Brant Chill, Rodney Tyra, Rick Rosecrans, Chris Crane, Kevin Boydston and Terry Hamilton took equipment and went down to Moore to help find victims of the tornado still stuck in debris. Tyler Phillips, Kenny Reyes, and Brad Knol came into the Fire Department and covered the city of Nichols Hills so the rest of the department could assist in the recovery effort.

Captain Roger Straka spoke about his experience in Moore, and what he encountered. Straka said he, Knight, and Chill took Truck 31 down to Moore, and reported to the staging center at the Home Depot. Their assignment was to stay in the path the tornado took in the area from 4th St to Eastern, and to check each home to see if anyone was still trapped in the rubble. In addition to the rescue task, they were also asked to check for gas leaks. Straka said the only way to do this

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was to listen for the sound of leaking gas; all the gas meters were covered with debris. Straka stated that all the gas meters that were hit with debris were leaking, and they were able to shut each one off or plug the leak. The NHFD worked in the destruction path and at times had to drive through yards because of the amount of debris in the roadway. But most of their rescue and recovery efforts was on foot because the roads were too clogged with debris and remnants for the trucks to make it through.

In addition to Truck 31, NHFD also sent Unit 34 and Brush pumper 32 to assist with the recovery efforts. Our firefighters were able to navigate the city of Moore due to map books provided by the Moore Fire Department. The three teams the NHFD sent were not able to work together during the aftermath of the tornado, and each was assigned to different locations in Moore. Each assigned area was checked two to three times. The first time was a quick check; the second time was a more thorough search. During their initial search, Straka said they came across one fatality, but family members were on the scene and police officers assisted them. Straka said the destruction was more than he could comprehend. "During the search, the only reason you knew you were walking between houses is that we were walking on stockade fences. You had to listen for gas leaks because you could not see the meters," Straka added. About the devastation, Straka said "Seeing it on TV doesn't do it justice. It's not the same as being in the middle of it. One minute you've got ordinary life going on, and the next minute you've lost everything." Straka saw Moore residents scrambling to get whatever items they could from their damaged homes. Some were carrying their possessions around in wheelbarrows, some were using backpacks, and some residents were carrying their pets. Straka said they checked with everyone they saw to make sure their loved ones were accounted for. The members of the Nichols Hills Fire Department were released from the scene after eight hours.

Risk Manager Lindy Stormont also responded to the call. Besides providing aid to the victims, Stormont also had family in Moore whose home was destroyed. Stormont grew up in Moore and was very familiar with the area. As she drove into the destruction zone, Stormont said "The thing that affected me the most was seeing the house I grew up in no longer there. My house was gone, my grandmother's house was gone, and my Junior High School, Highland East, was damaged. My brother's house was gone."

After assisting victims, Stormont went to help her brother and his family. She said that when the tornado hit, her sister-in-law and nephew were taking shelter in their closet. Her sister-in-law had checked Stormont's nephew out of Briarwood Elementary fifteen minutes before the tornado came through. By the time she realized how massive the tornado was, it was too late to leave. She and her son put their helmets on, got the dogs and

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got into the closet. When they were able to leave the closet, they saw what was left of their home. A few random walls were standing, the entire roof was gone, but the closet was still intact.

After the tornado passed, there was no communication, and no one knew if they were alive. Stormont was able to locate her family, and her sister-in-law, her nephews, and even the dogs made it through the storm with no injuries. She assisted them with trying to salvage anything they could find in the debris. Stormont said the remnants of the home continued to fall even on Tuesday.

Stormont's sister-in-law told her that she thought she and her son were going to die. Both she and her sister lost their homes, and had lost their mother to cancer just six months earlier. All of the mementos they had of their mom were gone, even the urn that contained her ashes.

Stormont said the devastation reminded her of a war zone. "What affected me more than anything was the cars. The way they were piled on top of each other, and with the big X's spray painted on them. It was such a large area. You could see people carrying their belongings out of the neighborhoods. People were carrying a sheet of plywood over 2x4s with their belongings on top of it." She felt the best thing to come out of the devastation was the way Oklahomans responded to this tragedy. "The volunteers, the emergency responders... there were so many who came down to Moore. And it was great to see that. We had police officers and volunteers asking us constantly if we needed food or water." And perhaps the most heartwarming story was how a complete stranger assisted her family. Stormont said "A total stranger let me sister-in-law borrow a brand SUV because hers was destroyed in the storm. He also gave them a \$1500 gift certificate to buy any essentials they needed. And on top of all that, he bought my nephew a new Wii system with 4 games. My sister-in-law is still driving the SUV!"



POLICE DEPARTMENT

On May 2nd, Detective Casey Nix began investigating a series of auto burglaries and break-ins that had occurred in the Windsor Huntington area of Nichols Hills. It was determined that checkbooks and credit cards had been taken from one of the vehicles. He requested that the victim obtain credit card statement showing where the checks and cards had been used. It was determined that several transactions were made at Wal-Mart and various convenience stores. Detective Nix was able to obtain video from some of the surveillance cameras and developed a suspect and suspect vehicle.

On May 13th, the police department was contacted by an employee of the Saving Spot at 3201 N. Classen to report that the suspect's vehicle was currently located at the 7-11 store located at N.W. 31st and Classen. Officer Brandon Ridgeway responded to that location and copied the license tag number from the suspect vehicle.

On May 14th, Detective Nix, armed with a tag number and suspect vehicle information was able to identify and contact the registered owner. Once Detective Nix identified the owner of the car he was able to quickly identify the fraud suspect as Stetson Blake Smith, a Caucasian male twenty one years of age who listed a home address as 644 Forster, Mustang, Oklahoma.

As a result of this investigation and the efforts of Detective Nix and Officer Ridgeway, six felony charges have been presented against Stetson Smith and warrants are currently being issued for his arrest. Needless to say, we believe that Mr. Smith is aware that we have identified him and that we are attempting to locate him and he has not been back to Nichols Hills.

ANIMAL RESCUE FRIENDS

If anyone wants to assist ARF in it's mission of saving unclaimed, impounded pets in Nichols Hills, they can donate time, old collars, leashes, crates, dog beds, food, treats, toys and, of course, money by mailing checks to Animal Rescue Friends, Inc of Nichols Hills, C/O Public Works, 1009 N.W. 75th Street, Nichols Hills, OK 73116 or by calling 843-4222 about donating items. ARF will respond by sending a 501 c 3 tax deduction letter (and offering a cat or a dog!). Any animal adopted through ARF comes with a 30 day money back guarantee.

MAY'S FEATURED PET



Cisco is 18 month old chihuahua weighs a little over 9 pounds. He is VERY sweet, but tested positive for heart worms. Cisco has been treated and is recovering, but he must be kept quiet & calm for another month. Cisco will have to have follow up treatment, but that will be provided by ARF.

Cisco is looking for a loving home!