

Rowlett

On the Water. On the Move.

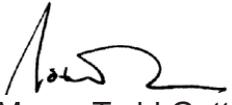
A Monthly Message From Mayor Todd Gottel - December, 2016

One Year Later...

Here we are, one year after the December 26, 2015 tornado, one of the most impactful events in our community's history. It has changed us in ways we still do not fully understand. However, it has made us a much stronger community. A closer, more caring community. What we have shared together will never be forgotten, the bond we have forged with one another is loving and lasting. Going out into our community after the tornado was a very sobering experience, the damage done was significant and the road to recovery has been long. But the way our community came together has been absolutely amazing. More people donating than I could ever have imagined, our local businesses continue to give with no end in sight, churches all over the City opening their doors to help, regardless of the denomination or background, turning their churches into donation centers and shelters. Thousands of volunteers assisting those impacted. Agencies and municipalities from all over sent manpower and equipment to help out our amazing City staff, saving our community over \$1 million. Oncor and Atmos teams worked around the clock to ensure we had power and gas services restored as soon as possible. More food donated to feed all of those working and all of those displaced than you could possibly imagine. The outpouring of love and services was astounding, the generosity shown our community indescribable.

We have made significant strides over the past year. Using other communities who have been impacted by similar disasters as a benchmark, Rowlett has far surpassed FEMA and other organization's expectations as to where we are in our recovery. And that's because of YOU, the members of THIS community. Most of those impacted are back in their homes, or will be soon. Our churches and businesses continue to aid and assist those who have a need. I will never tire of saying that God has richly blessed Rowlett, and at no time in our City's history has this been more evident. Yes, we have had some very trying times. But you know what? In our time of need, we all came together and cared for one another. And we will continue to do so because we are #RowlettStrong!

I hope all of you will join us on Monday, December 26 at Schrade Bluebonnet Park as we pause to remember and celebrate how far we've come. My wish and prayer for you during this reflective time of year is that God continue to watch over you and your family, bringing health and prosperity now and throughout the New Year!


Mayor Todd Gottel

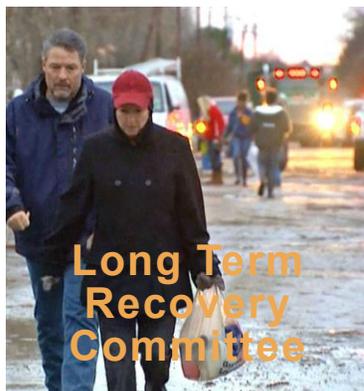


RETREET and Keep Rowlett Beautiful supplied and planted trees for residents who lost theirs in the tornado!



One Year Later - Rowlett Remembers

In the past year, we have made significant strides as we work together to rebuild our community. Over 190,000 cubic yards of storm debris was cleared. Most of those displaced are either back in their homes, or in various stages of rebuilding or repairing their homes. Businesses such as Walmart Neighborhood Market and Tatiano's Restaurant are open, with others, for example Sandra Trollinger Insurance and Rowlett Health and Rehab, well into their rebuilding process.



In January, the City formed a Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC), the role of which has been absolutely essential to ensure the wellbeing of those affected by the tornado. There continue to be many unmet needs and the collective goal of this committee is to help residents get those needs met. The purpose of the LTRC is to meet the need for ongoing coordination among agencies providing volunteer, financial, spiritual and emotional/physiological support. In addition, leadership is provided in the discernment of long-term needs for recovery and rehabilitation, which can be most effectively met or assisted by this collaboration. Advocacy for the people most vulnerable to having their needs overlooked in the public recovery processes has also been provided.

If you or someone you know needs assistance, please visit www.rebuildrowlett.org.

Citizens and groups creatively found ways to raise funds, here are just a few...

The **Rowlett High School Jazz Band** held a benefit concert in March, which raised **\$1,000**.

Born from a Facebook post, Steve Walker took the bull by the horns and approached the Rockwall Running Club about doing a benefit run. Together, they planned and executed the First Annual **Rebuild Rowlett 5k**. Almost 2,000 runners participated, raising **\$40,655!**

Rowlett resident **Troy Cox** raised more than **\$5,650** by creating beautiful home decor art pieces from tornado debris and selling them as a fundraiser. This effort grew from one Facebook post wherein he posed the question "If I create some art from fencing debris, would anyone be interested in purchasing it to benefit those who have lost everything?" The response was an overwhelming YES! Troy also created special pieces to honor Rowlett's first responders. One for all four fire stations, one for the police department and one for our very own Bat Mayor!

Rockwall Sports Center owner K.R. Hooks designed and sold **Rise Together t-shirts**, raising **\$29,797**.



Community Emergency Response Team

50 Rowlett Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members responded and were staged within an hour, setting up a command center inside the Rowlett Community Centre. CERT organizations from EastTex, Sachse and all of the mutual aid CERT program partners then responded. Almost 280 CERT members representing 22 CERT programs came to the aid of Rowlett citizens, braving the cold, driving rain, trudging through mud and debris to assist with search and rescue operations and to complete a windshield type damage assessment. In the days following the tornado, Rowlett CERT members walked the debris field day after day, handing out water, supplies and information to those still in their homes without power.

Interested in joining this invaluable community organization? Visit www.rowlettcitizenscorps.org for information on the next training classes!



Keep Rowlett Beautiful

KRB held a special document shredding and electronic recycling event just to ensure affected residents had a way to safely dispose of debris as they cleaned up their homes.

KRB also held a "Love Your Neighbor" event to help Rowlett residents affected by the tornado with their debris cleanup. Hundreds of volunteers from all over showed up to assist!

And now, as the recovery phase is a bit farther along, KRB partnered with RETREET on Saturday, December 10 to plant over 200 trees in the yards of those who lost theirs!

In 2016, 6,588 hours were volunteered at a value of \$155,213.28!

I would like to recognize the extraordinary actions of our City staff, along with the tireless work by countless volunteers and relief organizations over the past year. Without this coordinated effort, our community would not be nearly as far along in our recovery!

Neighbors Helping Neighbors...

In the moments following a disaster, first responders can quickly become overwhelmed with calls for help. Our Rowlett community really pulled together on that evening, with neighbors helping neighbors in many cases when access to areas presented a challenge and every moment counted. These are just a couple of those stories...

During the tornado, **Bruce Hargrave and Sammy Walker** each took shelter in their own homes, Bruce and wife Cathy in their laundry room, Sammy and his family in the 10x10 tornado shelter he had previously built in his garage. Once it had passed, they came out to survey the damage and make sure neighbors on Willowbrook Drive were all ok and accounted for.

Hearing calls for help across the street, they ran to neighbor Barbara Griffith's home, which was severely impacted. Her adult son, along with other neighbors, were attempting to free Barbara and her brother, Neil Heslop. Uninjured, Barbara was able to make her way out of the room she was semi-trapped in. However, Neil was trapped inside under about two feet of debris, which included brick and mortar. Sammy, Bruce and the others, which included Sammy's son Daniel Walker and son-in-law Travis Griswold, dug Neil from the rubble. Neil was in shock and had several noticeable severe injuries, among them an obvious compound fracture of his arm, including arterial bleeding. A neighbor, who is a nurse, used Bruce's belt as a tourniquet and slowed the bleeding. At that point, first responders arrived on foot, they were unable

to drive into the area due to all the debris so they grabbed their medical bags and response equipment and hiked in. They stabilized Neil and installed him on a backboard, then loaded him into the back of Sammy's SUV, radioing ahead to Lake Pointe Medical Center. Sammy and Bruce, along with Barbara and her son, raced him to the hospital, driving over storm debris and downed power lines and dodging around congested traffic stalled by the storm by traveling on roadsides and over medians, flattening all four tires in the process. When they arrived at Lake Point, the hospital was itself overwhelmed with those injured, but Sammy, an Olympic weight lifter who also competed in shotput and discus, was able to demonstrate that Neil's injuries were such that getting him to another hospital would not be an option.



Both Mr. Hargrave and Mr. Walker have expressed that they did not do anything out of the ordinary, nothing that anyone else wouldn't do and in fact what their whole

neighborhood DID do, that they just each had a pair of hands and a willing heart.

Mr. Heslop passed away at Parkland Hospital on Sunday, January 10 due to complications from his injuries.

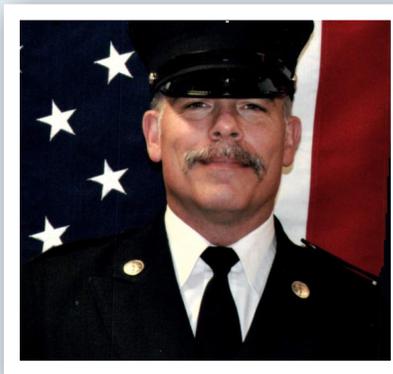


After heeding the alert received on his cell phone, Atmos Energy employee **Roy Moss** and his family took shelter in a closet under the staircase in their home. When the freight-train roar and sounds of breaking glass and flying objects receded, Roy opened the door, looked up and saw the sky. The roof was gone. He was unable to believe the destruction in his home, but so grateful they had all lived through this. After pushing through

the debris that once was his home, Roy opened the front door and was astounded at the destruction in his neighborhood: overturned cars, crushed houses, and debris littered yards and clogged the streets.

Alarming, the streets were also filled with an overwhelmingly strong odor of natural gas. Roy was well aware that the possibility of explosion or fires existed, so safety was a top priority. He also knew he was "boots on the ground" at this point. He immediately ran back inside, waded through his own debris and grabbed some tools, hard hat, safety goggles, gloves and an old pair of Air Force combat boots. He then proceeded up and down the neighborhood streets, shutting off his neighbors' natural gas.

Roy's insurance adjuster commented that he has been all over the United States assessing damage from natural disasters and he has never seen a greater sense of community than here in Rowlett, mostly due to citizens like Roy, willing to put their own personal safety aside to protect and assist their neighbors. Roy and his family have also expressed they are overwhelmed with gratitude from the volunteer spirit and kindness they have seen from the Rowlett community.



A Fire Fighter's Story

Rowlett Fire Rescue's Scott Martinez exemplifies the word "service."

After viewing the devastation Rowlett experienced firsthand during the immediate aftermath, Scott felt called to help the people whose lives were so severely impacted. For just that reason, to simply help. His first volunteer "project" was a home the Fire Fighters Association identified, turned out he had volunteered with some repairs and paint a few

years back. The homeowner recognized him, came to shake his hand and say thank you for helping. Her "thank you" was so heartfelt and meaningful, Scott felt determined to help those in this community he serves.

and manpower, driving the affected areas in the morning to identify those needing assistance, then putting a team together to respond. As he tackled more and more projects and picked up members along the way, the teams ended up consisting of firefighters from all over north Texas, as well as Rowlett citizens. He worked with many relief organizations, one of which said they do work across the country and have never seen a better, harder working, friendly and happy group of volunteers.

Selflessly and quietly, on his off duty time, Scott spent months helping residents tarp roofs, clear debris, pack up and move belongings, and make repairs to their homes, often spending his own money for supplies such as chain saws and drinking water. He was very moved by the Rowlett citizens. They may have cried, not known what to do next and been overwhelmed, but they never stopped smiling nor did they give up hope.

In those first few days, the Fire Fighters Association president asked Scott to be point person for those wishing to help. They jointly coordinated projects

Scott is truly the embodiment of the level of dedication Rowlett public safety personnel have to this community.

I would like to extend a heartfelt

Thank You

to all who have assisted in our community's recovery efforts...

Businesses

24 Hour Fitness
AT&T Satellite
Advantage Storage
Anytime Fitness
ASSI Gymnastics
Atmos Energy
Autobahn Transportation
Baker, Donelson, Bearmon,
Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC
Barrett Motors
Baylor, Scott & White Medical
Center - Lake Pointe
Big Bass Towing
Black Tie Moving
Body Enhancement Spa
Bowl-A-Rama
Cabi Clothing
Cathey Towing
Copper Express, Inc.
Crowder Gulf
DFW Metropolitan New Car Dealers
DFW Scrap Metal
Dallas Mavericks
Debbi Romeyn Photography
Discount Tire
Dish Network
Duracell
First Step Chiropractic
Forever Floors
Frito-Lay
Garland Chamber of Commerce
Golden Eagle Roofing
Goody Goody
Heart Homes
Jordan's Goodyear
K104
Lakewood Cafe
Lifestyle 180
LA Fitness
Lifetime Fitness
Lowe's
Manufacturer's Transportation
Nichols, Jackson, Dillard, Hager & Smith
Oncor
Regency Roofing
Rowlett Gold and Silver
Rowlett Rustic Creations
Servepro
S&H Waste Disposal Service
Spirit Outfitters
TFR Enterprises, Inc.
The Home Depot
The Woodlands Chamber of Commerce
Tide
Tom Thumb
TriCon
True North Emergency Management
Uhaul
Verizon Wireless
Walmart
Waste Management

Assistance Agencies

Billy Graham Rapid Response Team
Catholic Charities
Christian Aid Ministries
Crisis Response International
Daughters of the American Revolution
Disabled American Veterans
Disaster Assistance Church of Christ
Duck Team 6
Heartfelt Counseling
Islamic Council of North America
Life Message
Lone Star Santas
Operation BBQ Relief
Operation Blessing
Red Cross
Rockwall Exchange
Rockwall Helping Hands
St. Vincent de Paul
Salvation Army
Samaritan's Purse
Scientology Volunteer Ministers
Sheds of Hope
Storm Assist
Texas Baptist Men
Thirst No More
VFW 5076
Victim Relief

Community Support Groups

Rowlett Citizen Corps Council:
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)
Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)

Area CERT agencies:

Allen	Keller	Parker County
Arlington	Lucas	Plano
Bedford	McKinney	Rockwall
Dallas	Minuteman Disaster Response	Sachse
Denton County	Murphy	Saginaw
EastTex	North Richland Hills	Southlake
Hurst		

Boy Scouts
Girl Scouts
Keep Rowlett Beautiful (KRB)
FDB
Looter Booters
Rockwall Running Center
Rowlett Chamber of Commerce
Rowlett Community Centre
Rowlett High School
Rowlett Long Term Recovery Committee
Rowlett Strong, Inc.
Texas A&M Commerce
Transitional Resource Accessibility & Community Engagement

Animal Assistance

Animal Hospital of Rowlett
Four Paws Animal Hospital
Friends of Rowlett Animals
Hot Diggity Dog Grooming
Premier Vet Care
Rowlett Animal Shelter
Stonebridge Veterinary Hospital

Regional Support

Dallas Area Rapid Transit
Dallas County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
Dallas County Household Hazardous Waste
Federal Emergency Management Agency
City of Flower Mound
City of Garland
Garland Independent School District

North Central Texas Council of Governments Public
Works Emergency Response Team
City of Richardson Emergency Management
Rockwall Independent School District
Texas Department of Emergency Management
Texas Department of Health
Texas Department of Public Safety Driver License Team

Elected Officials

Special thanks to our elected officials, who went above & beyond on our behalf.

Governor Greg Abbott
Attorney General Ken Paxton
State Representative Cindy Burkett
Congressman Pete Sessions

Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins
Dallas County Commissioner Mike Cantrell
Mayor Todd Gittel and the Rowlett City Council

Churches

C3 Church
Central Park Church of God
Church in the City
Cornerstone Church
Crossroads Church
Eastridge Church of Christ
Firewheel Church
First Baptist Church
First Christian Church Rowlett
First United Methodist Church
Grace Fellowship Church
Holy Trinity by the Lake
Lake Cities Community Church
Lakepointe Church
Lighthouse Baptist
Mt. Hebron
New Horizon
Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Stillwater Community Church
Zion Baptist

Restaurants

Burger Island
Chick-fil-A
Chili's
Chiloso's
Chipotle
Dickey's BBQ
Dunkin Donuts
El Centro
Hubbard's
Jimmy John's
Kyoto
Lakewood Cafe
McCalister's Deli
McDonald's
Moe's Southwest Grill
Mr. Jim's Pizza
Napoli's
Olive Garden
Opa
Original Pancake House
Patio's Pizza
Raising Cane's
Sammee's Pizza Ghetto
Scooter's Coffee
The Track

And, most importantly...the CITIZENS of Rowlett, Texas, who have so selflessly given of themselves over the past year to create a stronger, more resilient community!



**On December 26, 2015 around 7:00pm, Rowlett was hit by an EF4 tornado.
The path through Rowlett was 1/2 mile wide and 3.5 miles long.
1,296 homes and businesses were impacted.
23 individuals were injured, one fatally.**

Tornado Anniversary Remembrance

*It has been a year since one of the most impactful events
in our community's history occurred.*

It has changed us in ways we still do not fully understand.

*However, it has made us a much stronger community.
A closer, more caring community.*

*What we have shared together will never be forgotten, the bond we have
forged with one another is loving and lasting.*

Monday, December 26

4:00 P.M.

Schrade Bluebonnet Park

4701 Sunnybrook Drive, Rowlett, TX 75088

**Please join us as we mark the one year anniversary with music,
fellowship and the unveiling of the design for a 30' memorial sculpture.**

**A new design for the park will also be on display, which when complete,
will feature a reflection area housing the memorial sculpture.**

