

Living With An Attitude Of Gratitude

TIM AND PAM REYNOLDS LEAVE THE COMFORT OF THEIR HOME TO HELP WITH THE DEVASTATION IN JOPLIN, MISSOURI

by Tina Baiter

PHOTO BY Jade Wilson

Do what you can, when you can. Those are seven words Tim and Pam Reynolds live by in all aspects of their lives. And on a Monday morning near the end of May, the couple were both at the gym, doing their normal workout routines, when they learned a tornado had devastated the town of Joplin, Missouri.

Joplin, a small town of about 50,000 people, is located only 6 hours away from Tim and Pam's spacious and cozy Texas ranch located near Texarkana, Texas. Usually Joplin would never make national news, and usually, Tim and Pam wouldn't be watching the news even if it had. On that Monday, neither was the case. The devastating tornado had taken out a large majority of the town, and the national media was covering the story. Pam watched the coverage of the disaster in disbelief as she continued doing her workout.

As a registered nurse and the chief operating officer of HealthCARE Express, a chain of urgent care clinics headquartered in Texarkana, Pam always wanted to go and volunteer when other national disasters had happened. As an emergency medicine doctor and a former Green Beret, Tim did, too. Timing, raising 5 children, and distance away from the disaster areas had kept them from volunteering in past disasters, but not this time. "I always felt a little bit guilty that I couldn't get down to help when [Hurricane] Katrina happened," Tim said. "Then, when Alabama happened, the same feelings came up. I always felt bad I couldn't go. When Pam came up to me at the gym and showed me what was happening, I said, 'Alright, I'm not going to feel bad about this one. We're going.'"

Tim and Pam left the gym and headed back to their ranch. They loaded up a trailer with flashlights, blankets, extra clothes, their Polaris Ranger, water and food. "We didn't want to become part of the problem, so we took enough supplies for ourselves for several days," Tim said. "By the time it was time to go, my parents who were in visiting [from Salt Lake City, Utah] said they wanted to go."

Tim and Pam's oldest two children, Spencer and Natalie, both pre-med students home from college for the summer, also volunteered to go. "When we left here, we actually had no idea where we were going to stay or what we were going to do when we got there," Tim said. "We didn't care where we stayed. We knew we could sleep in the truck if we had to. We just took off and started driving."

Because of their medical background, Tim and Pam felt they could help most in the medical arena. They contacted Buzz Barron, the director of the American Red Cross in Texarkana, to find out where they should go to sign up to be volunteers upon arrival. That was the only plan the family had as they headed to Joplin with a desire to help in their hearts. "When we drove into Joplin, it all looked fine when we got there," Pam said. "That was because we came in on the interstate and were not yet at the parts of town totally devastated. We drove toward the hospital because we knew it had gotten hit. After we left from there, we drove to the university where the Red Cross was. We did go in medically to try and help with the Red Cross, but because the hospital was one of the things that



Jana and Luke Miller were in the basement of their home and made it through the tornado without a scratch. They did, however, lose almost every possession they owned.

The view of the neighborhood from the Millers' backyard.



In this neighborhood, almost all of the second stories of the homes were completely gone.



Cars were tossed like tin cans into yards 2-3 blocks from the car owners' homes.



The 2011 seniors of Joplin High School ended graduation around 5:30 p.m., and the tornado hit just after 6 and destroyed their school.



had gotten hit, they had so many extra medical physicians available."

The Reynolds team arrived in Joplin late in the evening that Monday. Luckily, they had made connections to stay with the family of a friend of theirs who lived in Joplin—Hilton and Kathy McDonald. Though the McDonalds' house was untouched by the storm, their lives were not.

The McDonalds' son, Daniel, had graduated high school the night the tornado hit. The tornado completely destroyed the high school, but those attending the ceremony were spared, as the ceremony was held on the campus of a local university. Hilton, a surgeon, was scheduled to perform an emergency surgery immediately following his son's graduation. He left the graduation after his son walked across the stage and headed to the hospital. He was notified his surgery had been bumped to a later time slot, so he decided to go by Sonic to get a drink when he heard there was a tornado heading toward Joplin. Pam explains, "There were two 16-year-old girls working there, and he told them, 'You guys need to take cover. There's a tornado coming straight toward Joplin.' They told him, 'We can't do anything about it, we don't own the place.'"

From there, Hilton headed to Walmart. He was there when the sirens started going off, 17 minutes before the tornado hit. They closed the Walmart and wouldn't let anyone out. Hilton was snuck out the back door after management learned he was a surgeon on his way to do emergency surgery.

As the tornado hit, Hilton was under an overpass trying to avoid hail damage. He survived the storm

fine. The two girls working at Sonic were killed by the tornado in Joplin. The Walmart where he had been just a few minutes earlier was completely destroyed. The hospital where he was headed to do his surgery was also destroyed. But Hilton survived, and the next night, he opened his home to the Reynolds family of volunteers.

On Tuesday morning, the team loaded up in the truck with their trailer attached and started looking for those in need of help. The McDonalds had given them directions to a neighborhood they knew had suffered major damage. "Several of the houses had four or five people there already, and we decided to look for somewhere that didn't have a lot of help," Pam said. "When we pulled up to the Millers' house, it was just the two of them. Their house was completely gone. It was on a corner lot, and their house was all squished and behind where it had been."

Luke and Jana Miller had lost a lot in the storm, and they were hesitant to accept help at first. "I think it is so personal having people go through all of your personal belongings," Tim said. "Can you imagine everything you own being thrown across your yard? Once we did start to help them, they became so grateful. It was interesting the things they wanted to keep—the things that had some sort of emotional meaning."

By Tuesday morning, there were American flags blowing in the breeze in the neighborhoods that were hit the hardest.



Luke wanted only two things from his house. The first was a dresser his father built. The dresser had been stored up in the attic. The group found a ladder and was able to bring the dresser down from what little remained of the attic area. The second was the head of a deer he had shot. Jana was excited when she learned it would be possible to salvage her piano. All of the other stuff in their house was gone. They were okay with that because they still had each other. "They were small things to us, but it meant the world to them," Pam said, as tears filled her eyes. "They had been so violated; it made them so vulnerable. I think, as

the day went on, it became so overwhelming that Jana started asking me for advice on what to do with things. It was amazing how close we became in 12 hours."

After helping that afternoon, the Reynolds and Miller families headed to another part of town that had also been devastated to help Jana's mom, Millie, recover things from her home. Pam and Julie Reynolds, Tim's mom, spent most of the afternoon drying out hundreds of family photos. The photos told the story of Jana and Millie's lives. "That was also the home Jana was raised in," Pam said. "So she lost her own home, and she lost her childhood home where her mom had lived for 38 years. She lost all of that."

"And Luke was a pharmacist, and the pharmacy where he worked was at Walmart. That was also destroyed," Tim added. "So she lost her home. She lost the house she grew up in, and he lost his job, all in the same evening. And their attitude was amazingly grateful. Grateful they were still alive. Grateful their child wasn't with them when it happened."

Living with an attitude of gratitude is something Tim and Pam also do every day of their lives. It is a personality trait they believe they developed because of their background. It is the same personality trait that leads them to help others. "We both come from very different backgrounds than the lifestyle we have now," Tim said. "My dad is a truck driver with 6 kids. We were very poor when we grew up.



Larry Reynolds, Natalie Reynolds, Tim Reynolds and Spencer Reynolds help a Joplin resident attempt to find the outside of his home so he could locate his possessions.

Pam's dad is a farmer from North Dakota. Her mom made her clothes when they grew up. We've been blessed with so many things, and I believe part of happiness is being grateful for what you already have. So, every day, we try to remind ourselves how lucky we are. Part of that is what makes us want to go help when those things happen."

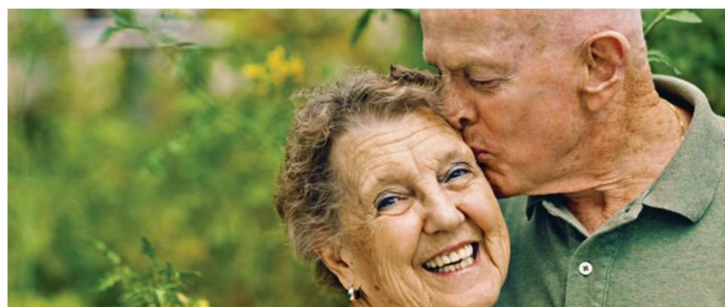
The Reynolds family is planning a return trip to Joplin later this summer, not only to help the friends they have already made, but also to help the town continue to recover from the devastation. The one thing they realized is, more than anything

else, the people of Joplin need help digging out and cleaning up.

Helping others is something Tim and Pam have always been good at. In addition to their volunteer work in Joplin, Tim also volunteers his services as a life coach through his free weekly newsletter, **LivingEveryMinute.com**. He has helped numerous people set and reach life goals. As an expert in the urgent care field, he serves as the publisher for a free urgent care publication, **UrgentCareManagementMonthly.com**. He believes in the importance of giving back and sharing education with others. In 2005, he was given the Wilbur Smith Award for starting People's Clinic.

Pam brought a leadership class to Texarkana called LifeSkills Leadership from the Heart. So far, almost 60 people have had their lives and businesses changed through the classes, which are held every three months. She is working to raise funds to send those who cannot afford to go to the classes. She is a former member of the Texarkana Chamber Ambassadors, a graduate of Leadership Texarkana, and a member of the local Kiwanis Club.

Neither Tim nor Pam have any intentions of halting their volunteer work anytime soon. "Our goal is to be able to grow HealthCARE Express big enough to have a disaster relief unit we can take to give out water, first aide and supplies," Tim said. "What we did was helpful, but it is so little compared to what we could do." 📌



"home is where healing begins"

Professional Team

- RNs
- LVNs
- Therapists
- Social Workers
- Translation Services

Clinical Services

- Diabetes
- Heart Failure
- High Blood Pressure
- COPD/Emphysema
- Additional Services Available

JORDAN
HEALTH SERVICES
"home is where healing begins."
800-64-NURSE (800-646-8773)
www.jhsi.com

Texarkana, TX 903-794-3102
Texarkana, AR 870-772-0958
Jefferson, TX 903-665-2142

Follow Jordan:     



EDGEWOOD MANOR

SKILLED NURSING AND REHABILITATION

Prom 2011: "Sentimental Journey"
Special people creating a special evening.





Thanks to our staff and families.

We offer: Short Term Rehab, Skilled Nursing
Call for a tour!

4925 ELIZABETH ST. • TEXARKANA, TX
903.793.4645

Diann Choate
Administrator

Carrie Trusty
Director of Marketing

Yvonne Seifert
Director of Nursing