

An Entire Different Town



Sophomore Keaton Burns is forever changed by tragic tornado

by: Emma Bjornson and Avalon Troiola

May 22, 2011 began as an average day. Sophomore Keaton Burns went out with her dad and sisters, never thinking about what would happen ten minutes after she got home. She never expected that her world would be turned upside down later that evening. This time last year, Burns was a freshman at Joplin High School.

“We went to the basement and got mattresses to put over our heads, and right then was when I heard the gate hit the house. It was so scary.” Burns said.

The tornado that hit Joplin, Missouri that evening was considered the ninth-deadliest tornado of all time. She may have been lucky in the sense that her home wasn't destroyed, but that didn't change the fact that everything around her would never be the same.

“Probably the scariest thing was when I walked out of my house afterwards. There was smoke and fires, people were outside, soaking wet, screaming and shaking, and there were parents looking everywhere for their kids.” Burns said. “It was like a horror movie. Gas leaks and fires, trees all over the place. It was like a trap.”

People were missing for days, and the tornado claimed the lives of many. A friend of Burns' named Lantz Hare lost his life that day. She spoke of the boy she knew fondly as the one everybody loved to be around.

Days went on after that tragic afternoon, but no one could seem to grip what had happened. Although the idea of the event was very hard to grasp, the

consequences were - and still are - very real.

“Nothing seemed to have the chance of going back to normal. No one knew what to do. Even if you were like ‘Oh I have to get something from the store’, you couldn't. You'd have to go to **an entire different town** just to get one thing,” Burns said.

Joplin has been rebuilding itself so that it can become a strong community once again. Students were moved to different buildings for school, but are missing out on the full on high-school experience.

“They can't even have pep rallies,” Burns said. “A lot of my friends feel like school is pointless now, and they have to get bussed different places for daily activities like band, choir, and sports.”

Burns' friends and other students in Joplin tried not to center their lives around the tornado, but they and their families found themselves facing struggles that no one should have to face. Burns and other members of the Joplin community still found happiness and reasons to smile. Seeing Burns constantly smiling in the halls, someone would have never thought that such a kindhearted girl could have gone through so much.

“I for one, was super lucky and didn't lose my family, my house, or my life.” Burns said. “People don't seem to get that something just like this could happen again tomorrow. There was a reason it happened, just like there's a reason behind everything else, and the good of it will come soon.”

42 Joplin

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42

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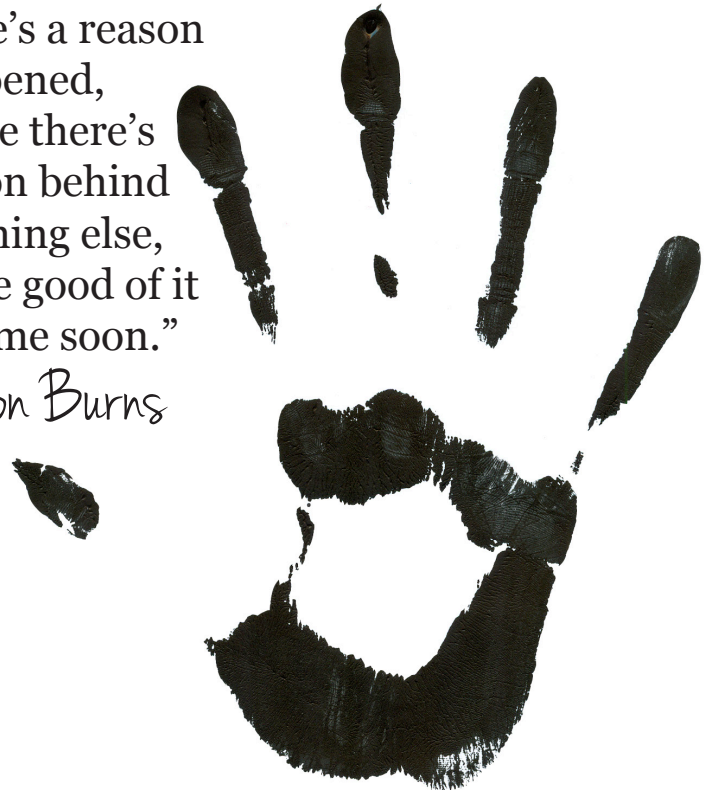
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《Lasting Impression》: Joplin

“There’s a reason it happened, just like there’s a reason behind everything else, and the good of it will come soon.”
- Keaton Burns



1) The sign in front of Burns’ wrecked high school is changed to “Hope” High School. This iconic image showed the whole world that this hearty town would not give up and would keep pushing forward till they were rebuilt.
Keith Myers/Kansas City Star/MCT

2) Burns and friends celebrate a post-tornado football victory with a funny picture. Teenagers all throughout the town kept up morale by joking around and enjoying hacing eachother. *Keaton Burns*

3) Burns’ friends talk to Paige Hemmis, a designer on Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. The crew built seven houses in seven days. Citizens of Joplin found the TV show’s visit inspiring. *Keaton Burns*

4) Joplin students show off school pride after the tornado. Burns and other students made sure to keep up spririt after the tragedy. The whole town came together after the tornado and showed the world that they would fight to get their town back to the way it was. *Keaton Burns*

Joplin 43