

Tulsa Partners

Mayor Bill LaFortune studies storm safety with his children in a recent public service announcement. The family is viewing Tulsa's Family Preparedness Guide.



Building a Disaster-Resistant Community—Tulsa Project Impact/Mayor's Citizen Corps December 2002

Out with the old, in with the new and improved: 2002 year-end wrap-up



Tulsa Citizen Corps Council formation meeting, Spring 2002. Front row, left to right: Ann Patton, J.D. Metcalfe, Sandy Cox, John Westmoreland. Center row, left to right: Juanise Weatherman, Brooke Dieterlen, Mary Finley, Crystal Kline, Neal McNeill. Back row, left to right: Linda Upton, Steve Piltz, Gary Bradley, Roy Heim, Mike Buchert, Leslie Seelig, Gaylon Pinc, Tim Lovell, Richard Hall, Steve Whitehead, Jim Lyall, and Bob Roberts.

The past year has been a year of progress and transformation. In April, Bill LaFortune was sworn in as mayor and immediately began working to fulfill his campaign pledge to make Tulsa one of America's safest cities. "As Tulsa becomes a safer place," Mayor LaFortune said, "we become more attractive from an economic development standpoint to companies and businesses who want to relocate or expand. With the threat of terrorism out there, people are considering leaving cities like New York and Los Angeles; the safety factor will make Tulsa more appealing to those people."

Tulsa Project Impact (TPI) became a valuable team player toward achieving that goal, forming the Tulsa Area Citizen Corps Council. The expanded triad of programs now includes Tulsa Project Impact, Mayor's Citizen Corps, and Tulsa Partners, Inc., formerly the TPI Foundation. The programs are being implemented by a consortium of private, non-profit, and public entities working to create

a disaster-resistant community. These entities are responding to President Bush's Homeland Security plan, launched after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The President's goal is to involve every American in volunteer programs in order to make the United States a safer nation.

In September, Tulsa was one of 17 communities nationwide to win a special grant of \$825,000. The money will be used to enlist citizens in the war against terrorism, crime, and natural disasters. A broad range of projects is in the works, including the creation of "Safe & Secure" teams of volunteers in neighborhoods, businesses, and agencies. These teams are a part of the citywide volunteer mobilization strategy whose purpose will be to avert, minimize, or respond to a disaster—any disaster. With properly trained citizens placed in all geographic areas of the city, ready to act at a moment's notice, the community as a whole is closer, stronger, *prepared*.





Tulsa expands programs for homeland security

The City of Tulsa has embarked on a new program to improve homeland security. The program includes identifying vulnerabilities from multiple hazards, including natural and manmade causes.

In-house experts conducted the assessments after training with outside experts from the IBM International Crisis Response Team and Texas Tech University, sponsored by Tulsa Project Impact.

Highlights of the findings:

- Tulsa enjoys a high level of preparedness and security, thanks in part to diligent work by civic leaders and by building and emergency managers.
- Intensive reviews and assessments conducted by experts in 2001 determined a number of areas where the city is vulnerable to disaster, as well as areas where improvements can be made for safety and security.
- These potential areas for improvement can be generally classified as structural (construction) projects and nonstructural (policy, procedural, and planning) projects.
- Recommended nonstructural projects include updates and expansions in emergency plans, communications, training and drills, employee equipment, and similar issues.
- The report proposes that additional funding sources will be needed to implement many of the recommendations, including potential federal grants, public-private partnerships, and long-term funding programs.

Tulsa Partners, Inc.

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CERT teams in training—Walter Evans (left) helps train volunteers for Community Emergency Response Teams in a simulated disaster on September 5. Now ordinary citizens can learn emergency response skills.

One More Family Prepared for Disaster

Local family receives early holiday gift

On Wednesday, December 18, a north Tulsa family received an early holiday gift. Tony Owusu is from Ghana, a former British colony in West Africa. He has lived in the United States for 18 years. On Wednesday, he and his children received a Safe Room, delivered and installed by Twister Pit. The Safe Room is courtesy of funds from a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and a number of private donors. The Community Action Project of Tulsa County, City of Tulsa Urban Development and Tulsa Partners came together to bring Safe Rooms to local homeowners, using CDBG funds for a Safe Room construction program. Participating Safe Room vendors are Family Safe, Twister Pit, and StormSafe.

Owusu is the tenth recipient of a Safe Room under the CDBG funds. The grant of \$35,000 was part of a demonstration program that utilized manufactured Safe Rooms to analyze their financial viability for low-to-moderate-income populations. What does that mean? Tim Lovell, coordinator of the Mayor's Citizen Corps, explains. "It means that the program is part of a study to find out how low we can go as far as the cost of Safe Rooms, including installation, in order to make them affordable to everyone."

And how low did we go? "We haven't been able to go under the \$2,000 mark," says Lovell. "Generally, Safe Rooms averaged \$3,500 in this program. But that is a huge improvement on the \$5,000 average when we began several years ago."

Owusu almost didn't get this Safe Room. After the ninth shelter in the program had been installed, the Community Action Project found that they had \$2,000 left, and needed \$1,300 more for a tenth Safe Room. "We didn't want to just give that money back," said Kathy Barnes of the Community Action Project. "We wanted to use it to help one more person if we could."

So a call went out to raise the missing funds. Private donors U.S. Infrastructure, Craig & Keithline, Tim and Cara Lovell, and the Village Builders provided the rest of the money needed to complete the final Safe Room. "Our goal is to get Safe Rooms for people who can't afford them, to promote the idea of having a Safe Room, and to educate people on the need for quality shelter here in Tornado Alley," says Lovell.



Tulsa Partners Board members J.D. Metcalfe and John Westmoreland give CDBG Safe Room recipient Tony Owusu the holiday gift of a NOAA Weather Radio from Tulsa Partners, Inc.

Ann Patton, director of the Mayor's Citizen Corps and Tulsa Partners, agrees. "Every family should have equal access to safe shelter."

Owusu is thrilled, saying that he never would have been able to have a Safe Room otherwise. "It was the last thing on my mind," he says. "I've got all these bills—medical, mortgage. I couldn't afford it."

Jon Klinghagen with Community Action Project sees the need. "All these people who were served would never have had an opportunity to get a Safe Room without this program."

Unfortunately, a repeat of the program this year is not possible. The application for grant funds for next year's distribution was rejected. However, Lovell says we will try again. "The need is great," he says. "One thing we learned is that while we were able to get the cost down, and I must say the vendors worked very hard to make that happen, the cost can't go down low enough to help those who live on a low income. So we have to try again, and we have to explore other options, including other funding options."

One option is to build Safe Rooms with volunteer labor. Will that happen? "We can try to make it happen," Lovell says. "We need to try."

Owusu saw the need for his children to have a place to hide during a storm. "I've seen what a tornado does to homes," he says. "Now when there is trouble, we can go into the Safe Room."

"The kids are our future. We've got to make sure they grow up safe. Now mine will be safe."



Have a Happy, Safe, & Prepared New Year!!



Highlights of 2002

Tulsa made significant strides in 2002 toward becoming a disaster-resistant, prepared, sustainable community. Here are some of the highlights:

- **Homeland Security**—Mayor Bill LaFortune established a Homeland Security Task Force designed to assess vulnerabilities and implement solutions at critical city facilities, to update emergency operations plans and color-coded alert systems, and to improve communications and coordination among all first-responder departments and agencies.
- **A new role**—the Mayor's Citizen Corps was created in response to President Bush's call for local volunteers to help fight the war against terror, crime, and natural disaster. In July, the City of Tulsa received a \$825,000 grant to help create the Mayor's Citizen Corps. Including this grant, Tulsa has received more than \$1.6 million in grants since 1998 to help build a disaster-resistant community.
- **Medical Reserve Corps**—In the fall, Tulsa Partners, Inc., received its first grant--\$150,000 to create a medical reserve corps—a cadre of medical volunteers trained to assist during a disaster.
- **New names, new faces**—The TPI Foundation adopted a new name—Tulsa Partners, Inc.—and elected a new board of directors in October. The group also created a new Blue-Ribbon Advisory Committee to help Tulsa Partners, Inc., mobilize and disburse resources to create a disaster-resistant community.
- **Community plan**—Tulsa prepared and adopted a far-reaching, community-wide plan for mitigating natural hazards. The Citizens Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee includes the TPI Executive Committee and the Stormwater Drainage Advisory Board.
- **Safe Rooms for those of low-mid incomes**—Through several different projects, Tulsa Partners was able to help place safe rooms in the homes of those who would not be able to afford them.
- **Survival Tips**—A new Tulsa Family Preparedness Guide gives families tips on preparedness for disasters. The successful guide was placed with City of Tulsa employee paychecks. The Scripps-Howard Foundation (KJRH, Channel 2) gave Tulsa Partners a

\$1,000 grant to distribute the guide to needy families.

- **Mayor's Vision Summit**—Tulsa Partners staffed the Mayor's Vision Summit on July 9. The Summit, which drew 1,100 citizens from around the city, focused on building a common vision and goal for the City of Tulsa.
- **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)**—Planning and training are underway for dealing with a disaster when the first responders are too overwhelmed to get to your neighborhood. CERT teams are being trained in basic first aid, fire suppression, and search and rescue.
- **Closeout for FEMA grant**—We closed out our FEMA seed grant to create the Tulsa Project Impact program. From 1998 through 2001, TPI mobilized more than 400 partners who donated more than 280,000 hours valued at more than \$1 million. FEMA's \$500,000 grant was leveraged with at least \$2.5 million in donated time, goods, and funding.
- **Emergency radios**—Tulsa Partners, Inc., donated 10 NOAA emergency radios to TSHA (Tulsa Speech and Hearing Association). The radios include special kits, with vibrators and strobe lights, to provide warnings to people with impaired hearing.
- **Volunteers**—More than 380 citizens volunteered for TPI, Citizen Corps, and Tulsa Partners, Inc.
- **Millennium House**—Neighbor for Neighbor broke ground for a demonstration house that is disaster-resistant, energy efficient, healthy, and more!
- **Constitutional Amendment**—Oklahoma voters approved an amendment that exempts residents from paying ad valorem taxes on new safe room construction.

Tulsa Partners is a periodic newsletter, available free and published in support of the Project Impact and Mayor's Citizen Corps programs to reduce disaster losses and improve homeland security.

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Bill LaFortune, Mayor