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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SUBJECT:** City encouraging skilled laborers to join efforts with volunteer rebuilding projects

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The sounds of hammers, saws and nail guns echo throughout the tornado devastated areas in Joplin and Duquesne. As rebuilding efforts continue, construction sites are becoming a common place to work for many volunteers who have come to help in the area's recovery.

According to AmeriCorps St. Louis and Rebuild Joplin, organizations working with the City of Joplin through the Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) to coordinate volunteer efforts, the number of volunteers traveling to southwest Missouri has remained steady throughout the summer. Depending on the stage of the construction, some work sites have needs for general volunteers, but currently many of the homes need the addition of skilled laborers to complete specific tasks.

"The needs are changing as we move through the recovery process," said Quinn Gardner, Operations Coordinator with AmeriCorps St. Louis. "Much of the work needed now involves plumbing, electrical wiring, and some detailed jobs that require skilled volunteers," she said. "We can match up existing general volunteers with skilled laborers, but we're currently experiencing a lack of skilled volunteers to work on the home sites."

Gardner explained that all construction projects need various skilled laborers throughout the build, including electricians, plumbers, and masonry workers to help with the foundation and concrete work involved in the project. In addition, skilled carpenters, both framing and trim carpenters, are always needed as well.

"Small groups of self-sufficient skilled laborers with multiple means of transportation would be the ideal situation," she said. "We also know that many of these workers may already be part of many builds through their employers, and yet they continue to come out and volunteer when their time allows. We truly do appreciate that extra effort because they provide valuable service to the projects."

### **Volunteering in Joplin**

Those interested in volunteering should contact Rebuild Joplin at 417-623-0065, in order to be assigned to a project according to the skills of the group. Skilled volunteers will work on home construction, while non-skilled volunteer groups may assist with surveying, tree watering and other projects. All volunteers are encouraged to be flexible as volunteer needs change.

Skilled volunteers who are coming to Joplin should bring a copy of their professional license or other credentials, including a business card or other documentation. AmeriCorps St. Louis tracks all of this information in a volunteer database for future reference.

AmeriCorps also reminds all volunteers to bring certain items that are essential when working out in the heat. Shade tents, coolers with ice, and water for their group are important, as well as sunscreen and insect repellent. In addition, it is highly recommended that groups bring their own tools if they have them due to limited tool supplies to loan out to volunteers.

“We encourage groups to be as self-sufficient as possible. If they come as a group, it’s also helpful if they have several vehicles so when divided into work groups they have transportation. And by calling ahead to Rebuild Joplin about volunteering, their staff can discuss the type of equipment and tools that would be helpful to bring.”

Gardner said that those groups who have coordinated their visit with affiliated church groups in this area should continue to follow this process, as area churches are working with the LTRC to coordinate work in the recovery and rebuilding.

### **Volunteering from Home**

Recently, other volunteer efforts have also been strong within volunteers’ home communities to help Joplin and Duquesne. Through fund-raising efforts, communities and volunteers can adopt a family that may need to purchase appliances or other items for the new home they will be moving into soon. ***Joining Hands in the Heartland*** is one such initiative of AmeriCorps St. Louis that partners families in need with volunteers wanting to help, but who are unable to make the trip to Joplin.

“Volunteers have been essential since May 22 of last year,” she said. “We know many want to help and we continue to be contacted with new ideas to address the needs of families in Joplin and Duquesne. The ***Joining Hands*** program is one of those great projects. By connecting volunteers or a whole community with families who have specific needs, another family gets to move home that much sooner.”

A recent survey conducted by the LTRC shows more than 100 families have specific needs that people can help meet without ever leaving their own communities. If you are interested in learning more about these needs, please contact the LTRC at 417-625-9192 or follow them on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/JoplinLTRC](http://www.facebook.com/JoplinLTRC)).

If you are interested in the ***Joining Hands in the Heartland*** project, contact Chelsea at AmeriCorps St. Louis by calling 314-772-9002 or via email at [Chelsea@americorps-stl.org](mailto:Chelsea@americorps-stl.org). More information on this program can also be found at [www.ACSTL.org](http://www.ACSTL.org).

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