A COMMUNITY’S RESPONSE
THE BOMBING OF THE ALFRED P. MURRAH FEDERAL BUILDING: 10 YEARS LATER
It was the community of humanity that responded to the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. Strangers coming together with the common interest of helping others. It started with the brave efforts of the first responders and the incredible outpouring of support from across the country. Next it was the response of volunteers who gave of their time, expertise and, at times, a shoulder. Soon public officials joined with nonprofit agencies to step forward and face a challenge unlike anything the country had ever experienced. While a decade has passed since that tragic day when 168 lives were taken and hundreds more impacted, the needs of many survivors still exist and will for many years. That is why 10 years later the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma continue to assist with ongoing medical and living expenses and the educational needs of the children. Here for the community, responding to needs.
April 19, 1995 is a date engraved in the minds and hearts of many. In one instance on that bright spring morning, thousands of lives and our community were altered forever.

The bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building resulted in an expansion of the traditional services of both the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma. Just as there was no precedence for this type of tragedy, there was no way to know how long the recovery would be for those impacted nor what type of services would be required. No one in our community was familiar with this type of emergency. People didn’t need just shelter; they needed help in rebuilding their lives. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing, no one was prepared for the tremendous social and psychological impact the tragedy would ultimately have on the families of victims, survivors, responders and the community as a whole. No one expected that services would still be needed 10 years later.

The outpouring of financial support from around the country was nearly overwhelming. Through a tremendous obligation to do the right thing, public officials, nonprofit agencies and countless volunteers worked together to create a fair and effective model of coordination.

Initially, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma provided leadership and coordination among the nearly 50 nonprofit organizations who responded to the emergency. Over the past 10 years, our two organizations have remained as the primary resources to meet the ongoing needs. We work in coordination with one another to ensure that any of those impacted who need assistance – whether it’s medical, living support or educational – do not go unaided. This publication provides an overview of the incredible collaborative spirit that enabled our organizations and others to meet the needs of many.

Motivated by a sense of compassion and the recognition of human need, people reacted and numerous organizations stepped forward to help. The events of April 19, 1995 created a community response unlike anything we had witnessed. And this response continues through the work of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma.

NANCY B. ANTHONY
Executive Director
Oklahoma City Community Foundation

DEBBY HAMPTON
Executive Director
American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma
April 19, 1995
The Initial Reaction And Response

Following the tragedy that occurred at 9:02 a.m. on April 19, 1995, we were a changed community and country. It was not a natural disaster or an accident. It was a deliberate act of hate. As people around the country watched the televised reports of the emergency recovery and relief efforts, they reached out to help.

Within days of the bombing, more than 50 local nonprofit organizations in Oklahoma City established charitable funds with the donations they received. Most of these nonprofit agencies had no experience in dealing with relief funds and it soon became apparent that their responsibility was going to extend beyond disbursing money but to also ensure that needs were met.

“Our local charities had no model for disaster relief of this magnitude,” says Nancy B. Anthony, executive director, Oklahoma City Community Foundation. “Compared to natural disasters such as tornadoes, which we are more use to dealing with in our state, the bombing in Oklahoma City left much more personal tragedy and much less personal property loss and impairment of living conditions.

“It became apparent early on that if these contributions were going to be put toward the efforts of the donors’, it was going to require an incredible level of cooperation among these agencies as well as the offices of elected officials,” Anthony adds.

Immediately after the bombing, the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Action Team worked with other emergency agencies on the relief and recovery efforts by providing workers, equipment, rescue and first-aid assistance as well as a shelter at a downtown church. In addition the staff worked closely with the families of the deceased.

“We all found ourselves dealing with a tragedy that was unlike any we’d dealt with before,” says Debby Hampton, executive director of the American Red Cross Central Oklahoma. “It was important that everyone involved in the long term recovery efforts work together to ensure no one fell through the cracks.”

It wasn’t long after the bombing that different organizations began working together and cooperative efforts were put into place. Within the first months a number of key activities took place that would establish a process that continues today.

Governor Calls Meeting
Within days of the bombing, Gov. Frank Keating called a meeting among all of the agencies receiving donations to discuss the coordination of these resources. The Oklahoma City Community Foundation volunteered to work with the United Way and other agencies in putting together a system that would coordinate service and ensure that the appropriate referrals were made.

Database Created
Next, the United Way agreed to establish a computer network database to track information on those who would need assistance. Within 15 days of the bombing, the computer database was operational, providing a common source of information for federal and state offices as well as nonprofit agencies. A massive survey was conducted to ensure that all survivors and victims’ families were included in the database and that all information was correct. The database would prove to be a vital link in ensuring that services weren’t duplicated and that no one who needed assistance was left out.

Case Managers
Each day brought hundreds of telephone calls to the numerous nonprofit organizations including the Oklahoma City Community Foundation; many seeking assistance of some type. Those organizations with professional case managers on staff worked to coordinate assistance and share information and identify the appropriate resources to address the needs. The Oklahoma City Community Foundation contracted with the Community Counseling Center so that staff members could refer a caller to...
one of three case managers who would then identify the needs, check the database to see what funds were available and to verify if the client had been helped elsewhere. In addition, each client was assigned one case manager so they did not have to cope with the varying organizations on their own.

“It was very important for every family where there was a death or a critical injury to have one case manager who would stay with them,” says Anthony. “I believe this is one of the most important early services provided by the community.”

Resource Coordinating Committee
Communication among all of the agencies involved was vital. As a result, the Resource Coordinating Committee was created and became an opportunity for all funding agencies to assist with cases presented by the case managers. For five years following the bombing, the committee met weekly then every other week to determine the best source of assistance for each case.

Funds Created At Oklahoma City Community Foundation
Both the Oklahoma City Mayor’s office as well as the Oklahoma Governor’s office were inundated with contributions. For example, Mayor Ron Norick’s office received more than 5,000 donations in less than a month. As a result, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation established the Mayor’s Disaster Relief Fund to receive and administer these contributions.

A number of donors were making contributions to assist with the long term educational needs of victims’ children. As a result, the Resource Coordinating Committee recommended the establishment of the Survivors’ Education Fund and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation assumed responsibility for the fund because of its experience in administering scholarships. Within a year of the bombing, Gov. Frank Keating contributed nearly $5 million from the Governor’s Victims and Families Fund to the Survivors’ Education Fund.

Both funds, in addition to others created, are administered through the Disaster Relief Fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of so many throughout the country, the Disaster Relief Fund is still able to respond to the needs of the victims’ families, survivors and first responders.

“The Resource Coordinating Committee was comprised of people representing the various organizations who executed the private charity system in the community,” says Anthony. “It was the best possible example of community involvement.”

SURVIVOR UPDATE

NANCY INGRAM
Nancy Ingram was conducting personal business at the Federal Credit Union in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building when the explosion occurred. She was trapped beneath heavy fallen debris, requiring rescue teams to use special equipment to lift the debris and remove her. She was hospitalized for two months with extensive damage to the lower half of her body and continues to live daily with the physical damage and pain caused by the explosion. “Whatever happened to me is sad, but so many other people have it worse,” says Nancy who now works part-time as a sales clerk. “I don’t think you ever get over it; you learn to deal with it.”
The Resource Coordinating Committee
A Community Joins Together To Meet The Needs Of Many

Considering the very magnitude of the April 19, 1995 bombing and the nation’s response, the opportunity for chaos existed. Instead, a community joined together.

To build upon the cooperative spirit that existed among service providers, nonprofit organizations and public officials, a coordinating effort was initiated by the United Way of Central Oklahoma, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, the office of Gov. Frank Keating and major service providers such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, several interfaith groups and civic organizations. The formation of the Resource Coordinating Committee provided an efficient process for all of the parties involved to respond to the needs of survivors. In the summer of 1995, the committee – comprised of more than 50 organizations – began to meet once a week for the first three years then bi-weekly for two additional years.

The Resource Coordinating Committee had three goals:
- To meet the needs of the primary survivor group and to provide resources that would serve long term concerns.
- To utilize the resources available as efficiently as possible, avoid duplication and waste, and minimize obstacles for assistance to be provided.
- To ensure that the spirit of cooperation that had become the hallmark of the community’s response continue to characterize the committee’s stewardship of the generous gifts.

Of the organizations participating on the committee, several had professional case managers on staff at the time of the bombing. These case managers would prove to be possibly the most important ingredient to the success of the committee’s response to survivors’ needs.

“We would meet once a week to make sure everybody was up to speed on the cases we were presenting to the committee,” says Rosena Rucker, one of the original case managers who began working with survivors and victims’ families immediately following the bombing. “These meetings among the case managers really helped the committee to focus on how to provide for specific needs.”

Organizations providing case managers included the Community Counseling Center, the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, Feed the Children, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church and Traveler’s Aid. In all, 12 case managers worked directly with those survivors with needs.

“Because of the case managers, the committee knew that anything that came before it was a valid case and that all of the organizations had an opportunity to assist with the cases presented. The open communication and cooperation among these groups also helped to reduce the possibility of fraud,” says Nancy B. Anthony, executive director, Oklahoma City Community Foundation. “This really was the private charity system at its best.”

Another important element of the case management was that each survivor who requested assistance was assigned a case manager who, from that point forward, would serve as a point of contact and liaison for resources.

“It was very important for every family where there was a death or a critical injury to have a case manager who would stay with them, whether the organization the case manager worked for actually provided the assistance or not, it was a person they knew they could call,” Anthony says. “Resource Coordinating Committee members didn’t want survivors or victims’ families to have to jump from one organization to the next. Instead, with an assigned case manager, they could make just one call.”

Every month during the first three years following the bombing, the Community Counseling Center case managers called each family affected by the bombing. “It was our way of ensuring no one fell through the cracks,” Rucker says. “For some, the emotional and mental strain of the event didn’t hit them until a year or so later so it was really important that we stayed in touch with them and provided assistance as we could.”

Although the Resource Coordinating Committee stopped meeting in 2000, the case management work continues. Ten years later, Rucker and Sue Bullard of the American Red Cross oversee approximately 100 active cases. Their role is an important service for those who have chronic physical and emotional conditions as a result of the bombing. They represent the ongoing community response.
Database Serves As Important Resource In Providing Assistance

The Community Network Database was born out of the need for a process that would streamline the community’s ability to respond. Thanks to a generous donation of computers, software and the countless hours spent by volunteers entering information, nearly 50 organizations and government offices in central Oklahoma could access, coordinate and document client needs and services while numerous other organizations not directly involved in the database provided additional resources and volunteers to assist in the initial recovery efforts.

For nearly five years, the database served as a central point of information for any organization with the resources to assist. The Community Network Database serves as a model of collaboration for a community faced with a far reaching tragedy.

Community Network Database Participants And Resource Coordinating Committee Members

Aid Association for Lutherans
All Souls Episcopal Church
American Legion
American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma
Baptist General Convention
Catholic Charities
Churches of Christ Victims Relief Fund
City of Oklahoma City
Community Counseling Center
Concerned Clergy for Spiritual Renewal
Consumer Coordination Council
Feed the Children
Federal Employees Education Assistance Fund
First Unitarian Church
Goodwill Industries
Heritage Presbyterian Church
Hospitals Helping the Heartland
In His Name Ministries
Indian Nations Presbyterian
Individual & Family Grant Program
(Oklahoma Department of Human Services)
Interfaith Disaster Recovery
Junior League of Oklahoma City
Kiwani Special Activity Fund
Lions International District 3-H
Love Link Ministries
Mayflower Church
Mennonite Volunteer Service
Metro Church
Nazerene Disaster Relief
Office of the Governor of Oklahoma
Office of the Mayor of Oklahoma City
Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber –
Emergency Business Assistance Center
Oklahoma City Community Foundation
Oklahoma County Private Industry Council – Project Phoenix
Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management
Oklahoma District Attorneys Council – Victims Services
Oklahoma Federal Executive Board
Our Lord’s Community Church
Presbyterian Hospital
Private Industry Council of Central Oklahoma
Project Heartland
(Oklahoma Department of Mental Health)
Rotary Foundation Disaster Relief Fund
Salvation Army
Travelers Aid
United Way of Metro Oklahoma City
United Way of Norman
United Methodist Conference – Disaster Relief Project
Unity Church
U.S. Attorney’s Office

Laws And Regulations Impacted Charitable Distributions

The outpouring of support to local nonprofit organizations following April 19, 1995 was incredible. Many of these agencies and survivors were not familiar with federal laws and Internal Revenue Service regulations regarding distribution of charitable funds. To assist these agencies, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation distributed the following guidelines:

- Criteria must be developed to provide an objective process by which to provide assistance.
- Grants of assistance had to be made for specific needs related to the tragedy.
- The funds could help people who had been distressed by the bombing even if they were not poor but were in need of assistance such as shelter or counseling.
- Charitable funds could not accept contributions that were earmarked for specific individuals or families.

“The IRS rules stated that funds had to be distributed based upon needs related to the tragedy,” says Nancy B. Anthony, executive director, Oklahoma City Community Foundation. “This prevented an arbitrary division of funds. Because there were so many individuals impacted, in addition to the families of those who were killed, these rules ensured that needs were met; not that money was simply handed out.”

“Ten years later, we’re still able to meet the physical, emotional, and educational needs that very much exist today and will for some time,” she adds.
Twelve professional case managers were in daily contact with survivors in the months immediately following the bombing. Their work with survivors played a vital role in the initial assistance process.

Today the ongoing management of approximately 100 active cases is handled by Rosena Rucker and Sue Bullard. Both Rucker and Bullard were part of the original group of case managers. Rucker, who is with the University of Oklahoma Child Study Center offices, works with survivors who receive assistance through the Disaster Relief Fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. Bullard, a case manager with the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma, continues to work with people affected by the bombing through the Red Cross Bombing Recovery Project. Both women agree that neither one expected to still be serving as case managers 10 years after the tragedy.

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“I was told (my role) would last one year,” says Sue Bullard, assistant director of case management for the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma. “I think the thing that has struck me the most is the ripple effect the Oklahoma City bombing has had on people and the fact that 10 years later, there are still so many needs in existence.”

Rucker says she has been able to continue as a case manager because she and the survivors she works with have a clear understanding of her role.

“I’ve always strived to be fair-minded and communicate what I can and can’t do,” she says. “For many of the families, they had a very difficult time trusting and believing in not only themselves but others. We’ve been able to overcome those feelings by being consistent and now they know they can call me. I feel really good about being a part of their lives for the past 10 years.”

Bullard agrees. “It really has been a remarkable position to be in,” she adds. “I feel the American Red Cross has done a tremendous job in keeping the services fair and accountable.”
Providing Educational Support For Surviving Children

The stories of the children who lost one or both parents in the April 19, 1995 bombing touched the hearts of many donors around the country who sent in contributions to support the future education of these children. The response was so great that within weeks, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation established the Survivors’ Education Fund for those children. The rationale behind the fund was that those more than 200 children who were still economically dependent upon their parents had not only lost financial stability but also an emotional support system that would help them continue their education following high school.

It was a logical move for the Oklahoma City Community Foundation to assume responsibility for the fund because of its long term endowment orientation and its experience in administering an independent scholarship program. Contributions to the Survivors’ Education Fund came from individuals, civic organizations, schools corporations and foundations throughout the United States.

“Our staff talked to literally hundreds of donors who emphasized their interest in addressing the children’s educational needs in an effective and meaningful way,” says Nancy B. Anthony, executive director, Oklahoma City Community Foundation.

The single largest gift to the fund came when then Gov. Frank Keating committed nearly $5 million from the Governor’s Victims and Families Relief Fund to the Survivors’ Education Fund. This commitment changed the scope of the Survivors’ Education Fund from a scholarship fund to a long term educational program that will continue to provide support until 2017, when the youngest eligible child completes their education.

Anna-Faye Rose joined the Oklahoma City Community Foundation staff seven months after the bombing to coordinate the educational funding as well as identify other non-educational needs the students might have.

“We want to ensure that the students are not only able to enter higher education but that they have the tools necessary to succeed whether its attending a summer camp or receiving counseling services,” Rose says.

In addition to the Survivors’ Education Fund, two additional scholarship programs were established to help this same group of children. These two programs are the Heartland Scholarship Program created by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund out of Littleton, Colorado. The coordinated support of all three scholarship funds ensures that each eligible child who has the desire and ability to further their education prior to the age of 25 is able to attend the equivalent of a four-year state institution whether that is at a university, community college or technical school. In order to expedite the process for the students, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation coordinates the administration of all three funds and serves as the point of contact for these students.

“We are working hard to ensure that the educational opportunity so generously provided by so many Americans to these children will be utilized effectively and will help each one reach his or her maximum potential,” Rose says.

10-Year Update On Scholarship Programs

213 students eligible to participate in one or more of the three programs

135 students have attended one or more semesters of college or technical training

5 students earned associate’s degrees or technical certification

60 students have earned a bachelor’s degree

53 children are still of grade school or high school age and have yet to reach age of eligibility (18).
Responding To September 11

While numerous service providers and nonprofit organizations responded to the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, both the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation were able to offer a unique perspective based upon their own experiences following the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

American Red Cross

Post September 11, the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma took an active role in both New York City and Washington, D.C. The staff took part in the response and recovery efforts and in assisting various agencies with long term case management issues. Thirteen individuals who had lost loved ones in the Murrah Building bombing assumed a peer support role in New York by providing comfort to those who had lost loved ones in the World Trade Center attacks. The Oklahoma City family members worked through the Family Support Center and, as part of the grieving process, traveled to Ground Zero with those who had lost loved ones on September 11.

In addition, Oklahoma City bombing family members became a source of strength to the Greater New York Chapter of the American Red Cross. Family members were able to share a perspective with the New York staff in a way that had not been possible following the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995. This strengthened the burgeoning collaboration between the American Red Cross and the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism to form a Peer Support Group that would act to bring comfort to future generations of those affected by terrorist attacks like those that occurred on April 19, 1995 and September 11, 2001. The Peer Support Group will consist of family members and survivors of both tragic events who can provide unique insight into assisting others.

“I have been amazed at the compassion the Oklahoma City family members, survivors and rescue workers have shown toward those affected by 9/11,” says Debby Hampton, executive director of the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma. “They have such a bond that hopefully no one will ever experience again. I will always consider these individuals my heroes and truly the nation’s heroes.”

Oklahoma City Community Foundation

Soon after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation began answering calls from people with nonprofit organizations in New York and Washington, D.C. who were asking about forms used on April 19, how the database had been established and how to provide services. In addition, media interviews were conducted with nearly 100 news agencies in the first six months following the attacks.

“Obviously, the scale of disaster in New York was of a different order of magnitude,” says Nancy B. Anthony, executive director, Oklahoma City Community Foundation. “But the fundamental issue which dominated both Oklahoma City and New York was dealing with a very large group of individuals who have lost a loved one in a very tragic and highly visible event. Dealing with the emotions and needs of the people is the driver for all activity.”

By early November of 2001, Anthony was working with several groups in New York including the September 11th Fund, the Robin Hood Foundation and several mental health groups. She would work directly with these groups for over a year.

“They wanted to hear what we had done, in terms of mental health counseling, and also what they could expect as far as the survivors and the families of victims were concerned such as that the first reaction would be anger followed by anxiety on what the future held for them,” she says.

The tragedy of September 11 also had an impact on the survivors and first responders from April 19, 1995.

“We experienced an increase in the number of individuals suffering from emotional distress because of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C.,” Anthony adds. “For several, the terrorist attacks triggered emotional and mental situations they had yet to deal with in the six years since the Murrah Building bombing. Luckily, we were able to help these people get the assistance they needed.”
On April 19, 1995 Susan Walton visited the Federal Credit Union to make a deposit. Susan suffered critical injuries to her legs in the bombing that required multiple surgeries followed by years of physical therapy, the use of a walker then crutches. In addition to the help of her husband, Susan required the assistance of a home health aid to manage the daily tasks of life. Even before she could manage independently, Susan began to work on “Suited for Success,” a community service project that provides business clothing to economically disadvantaged women entering the workforce. Going to the “store,” making agency contacts, organizing volunteers, speaking to civic groups, all became part of the rehabilitation process for Susan. Ten years after the bombing, while she still experiences pain and swelling in her legs and must use a cane to walk, Susan continues to give back to the community that helped her through the long recovery.

Ten years following the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, the primary goal remains the same: help people move forward with their lives in the best way possible.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of people across the country, our community has been able to work toward that goal by providing a wide variety of assistance. As a result, our community learned the power of cooperation and collaboration. By working together, Oklahoma City’s organizations developed an efficient and effective means of providing assistance.

Today, our two organizations — the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and the American Red Cross — continue the community’s response by working to ensure that those affected by the tragedy receive the ongoing services, support and encouragement to rebuild their lives.