



By  
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## When Tara Prosser locked eyes with her Weimaraner, Lily,

five years ago in that pet shop in Joplin, she felt, in that moment, the hands of fate. That puppy was meant to be her dog, her Lily, she knew this, yet she could never have foreseen the unexpected journey that single moment would inspire.

Tara and Lily have a motto. “Live right, train hard, and fight the good fight.”

They have found their “good fight” in their search and rescue work, a challenge that has led them to search for those who are lost and bring closure to the loved ones of many, despite whatever obstacles have stood in their way.

Tara and Lily live here, in Joplin, Missouri. Two heroes tucked into a tiny corner of a heartland hometown.

When Lily was rushed to the veterinary ICU in her first bout with Addison’s Disease, no one thought she was going to survive. But she did survive. She lived to see her hometown of Joplin annihilated, only one short month after her illness. She lived to walk out onto the remains of those streets, despite the heat, the rain, the glass and the ruins and fight her good fight for Tara, and for the city of Joplin.

Lily is not a perfectly healthy dog. She gets monthly injections. She has trouble, sometimes, handling the heat. Yet she is alive to sniff the wind and wag her tail and run in all of her rousing Weimaraner glory. Lily is not a perfectly healthy dog. But she is going to be OK.

### CHAPTER 8: Hope

Driving the streets of Joplin today is like driving through two cities. On the outskirts of town are the original brick homes, a few storefronts, a few trees or perhaps a garden. But the middle is a

“Retiring Lily has crossed my mind,” Tara said. “But she wants to work. Someday she will tell me she has had enough, but I do not think that day is today!”



So, for now Lily is going to live right, train hard and fight the good fight. And Joplin will too.

“Lily, A True Story of Courage & the Joplin Tornado,” published with Reedy Press and available wherever books are sold.

new place. Shiny siding on the sides of homes. Construction projects.

There is not a healthy tree in sight. There is a great, gaping, muddy hole where there used to be a high school. Near this pit, the painted tree still stands. It is leafless, its rainbow splotched bare branches reach skyward as its many birdhouses sway lightly in the breeze.



**“Hope” is the thing with feathers-  
That perches in the soul-  
And sings the tune without the words-  
And never stops at all-**

excerpt from “Hope” is the thing with feathers by Emily Dickinson



Today, in Joplin, the hammers never stop. The rebuilding hasn’t stopped. People still grocery shop, go to work in the morning, walk their dogs, buy their coffee and go to school. Life hasn’t stopped and neither has Lily.

## Dig A Little Deeper!



Tara and Lily were part of the effort to rebuild Joplin. Visit the Rebuild Joplin website to learn about the current efforts to rebuild Joplin: [rebuildjoplin.org](http://rebuildjoplin.org). After you have learned about how to donate or help, write a public service announcement (PSA) to let others know how they can help.

Since the Joplin, Missouri, tornado in 2011, many other communities across our country have experienced devastating losses caused by tornados. Search for newspaper websites on the Internet for local stories about these tragedies. How do they compare to what happened in Joplin?

**In the News:** Have you ever heard the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words?” The painted tree in Joplin symbolized hope. Use the newspaper to find examples of pictures that tell the story of hope. Explain why you chose each picture.

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