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‘I Survived’ Author Visits with a New Book About Joplin Tornado

Meet-and-greet set for Tuesday at library



Usually when Lauren Tarshis writes about a child surviving a disaster, it's based on something that happened long

ago. So the thought of writing about the May 22, 2011, tornado into the next installment of her "I Survived" series of kids' books made her at first reluctant.

But the letters kept coming.

"I started getting letters from kids from Joplin, saying they read the series, and why don't you write about Joplin?" Tarshis said. "I had followed the tornado closely, hearing about the disaster and seeing pictures, and sending donations. I never considered doing it, because I didn't want to tread on the experiences of those who went through it. But then I kept getting requests."

"I Survived the Joplin Tornado, 2011" the 12th book in her series, was released by Scholastic in August. Tarshis will spend this week talking to some of the school librarians who helped set her on the path to writing it. She will also do a meet-and-greet Tuesday at the Joplin Public Library.

It won't be her first trip to Joplin since the tornado. Tarshis visited elementary school librarians in Joplin schools in 2013. From there, she started a six-month stretch of research delving into Joplin history and experiences of those who went through the storm.

The experience framed the direction of her story, and made her realize that it should be as much about response and resilience.

"Of the people I talked to, what was really striking is how afterward, they stayed in their neighborhoods, how they helped each other out, how they went to Moore (Oklahoma) to help out with their disaster," Tarshis said. "That's what I wanted to share. I didn't want this to be 15 chapters about destruction."



The book tells the story of Dexter, an 11-year-old who gets the opportunity to go on location with the host of his favorite storm-chasing TV show. They head out to catch a storm, but when that storm shifts direction, it becomes dangerous for the two.

The book is the most recent in a series that covers events such as the sinking of the Titanic, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the battle of Gettysburg and the San Francisco earthquake. Her next book deals with the explosion of the Hindenberg, and she plans another one set in the Revolutionary War.