

ESSAY PAGE

Before the spring of 2007, Enterprise, Alabama was a quiet town where everyone minded their own business. But one tragic day changed everything. Last year on March first Enterprise High School was ripped apart by a category four tornado while the students were still inside. Students were struck with bricks and pieces of the ceiling came crashing down around them. Many students were buried under rubble, and others were trapped in buildings. The building was demolished, and when school resumed a week later the students were relegated to trailers set up at the nearby community college. Eight students died that day, and to my great sorrow five of them were my friends.

That day changed my life and the lives of the entire Enterprise student body. We stopped going to school during regular hours, because the administration did not want the high school classes to interfere with the college schedule. Our classes often forfeited lessons in favor of discussing the tragedy and helping one another get through the trauma and its aftermath. However, even though the damage was devastating, what happened after was absolutely astonishing. The entire community came together, everyone was helping everyone else, and we found ourselves talking to strangers as if they were old friends. We all worked together to recover and rebuild what we had lost. We all became stronger because of the tragedy, and although we were plagued with sadness we will always remember the strength it gave us, and the knowledge that we can rely on our neighbors to help in a crisis.

I was lost and confused after the tornado. I could not believe what had happened. I went through a period of time where I would not eat or drink, and I clung to my friends as a safety blanket. We talked through our emotions over and over, and eventually we were all able to laugh again, because even though we had witnessed such immense destruction and endured such sorrow, we were still alive and had plenty for which to be grateful. With the help of our neighbors, and sympathetic people all over the country, we in the city of Enterprise were able to get back on our feet and rebuild our shattered lives. We have taken so much more than a sad memory from the tornado. It made us all stronger, and for that I am grateful. Our community has come together in a way no one ever thought possible, and we now have plans for a new high school that is bigger, better, and safer than any we had before. This experience has taught me that our greatest trials can yield blessings, and out of our greatest sorrow can come our greatest strength.

I will graduate from Enterprise High School on May 29th, and I will begin attending Troy University as a freshman this fall. I am confident that the strength and maturity that I gained through this ordeal will help me overcome the challenges that lie ahead.