



My View

Always Ready . . . Always There

If you've watched weather reports this winter you know that the northeast part of the country has been "slammed" with major snowstorms. When I hear about these storms, I have occasionally asked myself "I wonder how TIP Volunteers in the northeast affiliates get to TIP Calls under these conditions? After all, even ambulances in New York City couldn't get around the city after a major storm recently. I finally decided to ask Leslie Skill-Calder, the Crisis Team Manager of our Portland, Me Affiliate if/how TIP functions when snow brings a city to a standstill. She responded by telling me about a specific TIP Call which says it all. Following is the call Leslie shared with me in her own words.....

Another winter storm was bearing down on the folks of Maine most of the afternoon. For TIP of Portland it had been a quiet day. Thank goodness, because in greater Portland about 5 inches of snow had fallen and the snow was turning to freezing rain. But at 6:35 pm TIP Dispatcher Gary Landry received a request for a Tip Volunteer from the local Trauma Center. He called veteran Tip Volunteer Laura Garson and asked her to respond.

Laura was nervous about responding. She lives "off the beaten track" and her road had not been plowed since earlier that day. In addition she was snuggled up by her wood stove and quite settled in. But Laura is a dedicated Tip Volunteer. She strapped on her L.L Bean boots, put on her mittens and wool hat and headed out the door to the Trauma Center.

On the way to the call Laura struggled to keep her windshield clear, but ice was forming as quickly as it was cleared off by the wipers. The roads were sparkling, and Mainers know that's NOT a beautiful thing. Laura's response time was delayed because of these challenges, but she arrived at the hospital and was grateful for safe passage. She informed the Tip Dispatcher not to send another volunteer even though her shift was ending. She didn't want another volunteer to have to brave the weather conditions. Needless to say the night TIP Dispatcher Jane Croston and I did not rest until we knew that Laura was home and resting alongside her beloved wood stove.

Laura called me to debrief the next morning. She was so grateful she went on the call. When she arrived she found a woman sitting alone while her grandmother was dying. Laura connected deeply with this woman and they talked for more than 2 hours. The woman was so thankful to have the company as she sat vigil by her grandmother's side. Both Laura and I agreed she was meant to be there on this call. On this night, neither snow nor sleet could keep a Tip Volunteer from providing compassionate support to someone in need.

I am very proud of our Tip leaders and volunteers in Portland, Maine! They certainly put our "always ready, always there" motto into action, even in the most extreme weather circumstances. You can express your appreciation to Leslie Skill-Calder and her volunteers at skill@commcc.org

If you have a specific TIP call you would like to share which illustrates how a TIP Volunteer braved the elements or other challenges to get to a TIP call please contact Wayne tipincceo@aol.com

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