



Community stepped up before the city did

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In the words of Kendrick Lamar, “Sometimes you just gotta pop out and show” them.

On May 16, a tornado swept through parts of St. Louis, leaving behind destroyed homes, power outages, and thousands of displaced residents—most of them Black and living in under-resourced neighborhoods. In its aftermath, a different kind of force sprang into action: grassroots organizers, neighbors, and volunteers rushed in to help within hours.

Their swift, direct efforts came despite a “do not self-deploy” directive from key officials. But in the absence of a clear and immediate government response, community members became first responders—coordinating food, housing, and emergency aid.

Meanwhile, some elected officials focused on formal aid requests, sporadic neighborhood appearances, infrastructure issues, and thanking volunteers—urging patience more than immediate support.