

Meet Our Tiffany Circle Co-Chairs, Nisha Baxi and Megan Erk



How long have you volunteered with the Red Cross and what inspired you to get involved? Megan Erk

Nisha: I've volunteered with the Red Cross since 1999. I wanted to get involved in helping people and saw there was a Red Cross club at my high school. My favorite memory was running the Leadership Development Center (which hadn't been established in the Silicon Valley Chapter). I taught a public speaking course to my peers even though I had no public speaking experience!

Megan: I have been an American Red Cross volunteer since 2010, and was initially inspired to volunteer on September 11th, 2001. On that terrible day my husband Kaya, eight-month-old son Aleks, and I were living in Lafayette, CA. Thinking there was going to be an

immediate need for blood Kaya and I immediately headed down to the American Red Cross Blood Donation Center in Pleasant Hill to donate. When we got to the center there was already a line around the building to donate. No one knew at the time the terrible truth that there would not be the need for blood donations. On that horrific day and in the days, weeks, and months that followed our country saw the worst, and the best of humanity. Although I was not able to volunteer immediately after the September 11th attacks, I decided that day to volunteer for the American Red Cross as soon as our son was old enough for me to deploy.

Who do you look up to as a female role model?

Nisha: I certainly look up to Clara Barton as a female role model because it takes extreme dedication and bravery to help others especially when there is an active disaster or war. Beyond Clara I'd say my mother who is a retired nurse. She's saved countless lives including my own father's (how they met) and inspired me to join the Red Cross.

Megan: Although I have many female role models I look up to, including Clara Barton, there are two other women who stand out. First, my mother who was one of only two women in her law school class. Her first day of class her professor pulled her aside and told her she didn't belong in law school. He actually accused her of taking the spot from a man. Needless to say, she ignored his comments, finished law school, passed the bar, and eventually became a Deputy Attorney General for the State of California. She went on to successfully argue and win two cases in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Secondly, I see such eloquence and brilliance in the first youth poet laureate in U.S. history, Amanda Gorman. Her poems are a clarion call to women and men across the United States, and indeed around the world. At 24 years old Amanda Gorman represents the future of what women can and must do to speak up and speak out. She is simply astonishing.

What's a challenge you have overcome that you are most proud of?

Nisha: We are often in the way of our own success. I'd often tell myself I wasn't good enough, ready, or deserving of leadership positions and wait to be asked. Now I love raising my hand and saying I can do something or being very clear on what I can't do.

Megan: A recent challenge I had to overcome was writing and defending my master's thesis from Georgetown University in Emergency and Disaster Management with a focus in Homeland Security. The challenge wasn't writing it, it was writing it while I had COVID-19 with significant and still lingering brain fog. The irony was that I was writing my thesis on the U.S. federal response to the COVID-19 outbreak and eventual pandemic during 2020. Somehow, I managed to finish the program with my 4.0 intact, a miracle in itself!

What is your favorite line of Service in the Red Cross and why?

Nisha: As a Girl Scout, I am all about being prepared so Training and Certification is near and dear. If everyone had the skills to help someone in their hour of need, the world would be a much better place. In the past 5 years I've had to use lifesaving Red Cross skills twice, once for someone I knew and once for someone I didn't.

Megan: My favorite line of service in the Red Cross is working in Government Operations which falls under the umbrella of External Relations. I love the challenge of working in an Emergency Operations Center. During a response the Red Cross representative has to collaborate with all of our partners and stakeholders to ensure those affected by natural or human caused disasters get the assistance they need as soon as possible. It is like putting together a very complex puzzle, while the table is simultaneously spinning and falling over. All the pieces need to fit together precisely to ensure a successful response.

What excites you most about the future of the Red Cross and our Tiffany Circle?

Nisha: What excites me most about the future of the Red Cross and our Tiffany Circle is inviting high potential, earlier mid-career professionals into the fold. We have to foster the next generation of Tiffany Circle members to keep the Red Cross mission alive!

Megan: What excites me most is that we have all the tools we need to meet this moment in history. I see so much passion for service to others in the Red Cross and in the Tiffany Circle on a daily basis. The trick is turning that passion into action. We have it in us to make meaningful and lasting positive change in the lives of people who are going through extraordinary hardship. Thank you all for your commitment to the American Red Cross, and the NCCR Tiffany Circle. Through the amazing female leadership of the Tiffany Circle the American Red Cross is able to carry out its mission to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.



American Red Cross
Tiffany Circle