Mission
The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Vision
The American Red Cross, through its strong network of volunteers, donors and partners, is always there in times of need. We aspire to turn compassion into action so that...

...all people affected by disaster across the country and around the world receive care, shelter and hope;
...our communities are ready and prepared for disasters;
...everyone in our country has access to safe, lifesaving blood and blood products;
...all members of our armed services and their families find support and comfort whenever needed; and
...in an emergency, there are always trained individuals nearby, ready to use their Red Cross skills to save lives.
Message From the President and CEO

Time and again, I’ve seen how people facing emergencies turn to us for hope, help and comfort. The American Red Cross Guide to Services will introduce you to the breadth of lifesaving work we do every day, in all corners of our country and around the world, due to the generosity of our donors and volunteers.

In my time at the Red Cross, I’ve visited with many folks affected by disaster, and I will never get used to looking into the eyes of someone who has lost everything to a house fire, earthquake, tornado or hurricane. My heart breaks for people facing devastating situations like these, and it makes me even more thankful for the Red Cross mission.

Our humanitarian work is vast. We provide food, shelter, supplies and health and emotional support in the wake of disasters. We teach lifesaving skills such as first aid, CPR and water safety. We support our service men and women before, during and after deployments. We provide lifesaving blood products to meet our country’s blood needs. And we work with our international partners to respond to disasters, build safer communities and educate future humanitarians abroad.

Embracing technology and social media, we are also finding new ways to serve the public. We created a series of mobile apps for iPhone and Android on first aid, hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires, which give people fast and free information right when they need it. We’re developing additional ones, as well, so check redcross.org/mobileapps for updates.

In Washington, D.C., our Digital Operations Center gives the public a virtual seat at the table of Red Cross disaster response. The DigiDoc integrates social conversations with relief efforts. People affected by disasters inform us and help us anticipate needs via the social web. Even more exciting, our digital volunteers provide resources, tips and support to those affected. This is the first social engagement center in the world dedicated to humanitarian purposes.

More than 90 percent of Red Cross workers are volunteers, serving in more than 500 chapters and 36 Blood Services regions in the U.S., and on military installations around the world.

It’s a great privilege to work at the American Red Cross. The compassion of our staff, donors and volunteers is unending. Working together, we will continue to fulfill our mission and provide tangible assistance and a shoulder to lean on for those facing life’s darkest moments.

Gail McGovern
The American Red Cross Guide to Services

Each and every day, more than 500 chapters and 36 Blood Services regions of the American Red Cross provide assistance and resources to communities across the United States. This American Red Cross Guide to Services will help you learn more about the five major areas of service within our organization.

Whether it is a hurricane or a heart attack; a call for blood or a call for help, the American Red Cross is there.
Our Congressional Charter

The American Red Cross is chartered by Congress. Under the Congressional Charter, the organization’s mission is defined, as is its governance structure (36 U.S.C. §300101, et. Seq.). The charter also codifies that the American Red Cross and its chapters are a single national corporation organized to help fulfill United States treaty obligations under the Geneva Conventions. The charter mandates that the Red Cross maintain a system of domestic and international disaster relief, and entrusts the organization to serve as a medium of communication between members of the military and their families.

In May 2007, the American National Red Cross Governance Modernization Act (P.L. 110-26) was enacted into law. This legislation amended the Red Cross Congressional Charter for the first time in 60 years. While the American Red Cross works closely with governments at all levels, it is an independent, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

Red Cross clubmobile workers preparing for a journey after D-Day during WWII.
What We Do

For more than 130 years, the mission of the American Red Cross has been to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Every day through the Red Cross, people mobilize to help their neighbors, whether they are down the street, across the nation or around the globe. A half million volunteers and more than 30,000 employees of the Red Cross, many from communities like yours, help provide these life-changing and often lifesaving services.

The Red Cross is not a government agency; it relies on generous donations of time, money and blood to do its work. An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs.

Governed by volunteers and supported by voluntary donations, the American Red Cross is a network of:

- More than 500 locally supported chapters.
- 36 Blood Services regions.
- 5 Blood Services divisions.
- 58 Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) stations.
- Nearly 20 International offices.

The Red Cross provides a unique, community-based network focused on the following five major areas of service.

Helping disaster survivors

People affected by disaster need to know that they have a place to stay, food to eat and emotional support as they take the first steps to recovery.

The victims of nearly 70,000 disasters each year rely on the Red Cross for immediate help. While the vast majority of these disasters are single-family and apartment home fires, the American Red Cross stands ready to support those affected with their immediate emergency needs. In addition to individuals affected by a disaster, the American Red Cross provides support to first responders.

Through our Red Cross chapter network, we are able to participate in federal, state and local government agency disaster planning exercises and response efforts. We work closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as co-leaders of the mass care portion of Emergency Support Function #6 of the National Response Framework. The Red Cross also partners with
community organizations and corporate supporters to provide emergency shelter, food and health and mental health services as well as resources and referrals to aid in recovery.

**Connecting the Armed Forces with their families**

Long separations caused by military service create special needs for military families. The Red Cross gives support to active-duty military members, National Guard and Reserve members, veterans and their families to cope with deployments and reconnect afterward. We also provide emergency communication services, support for the sick and wounded at military and veterans hospitals and assistance in obtaining emergency financial support.

**Teaching skills that help save lives**

American Red Cross training and educational programs help to save lives and empower people to respond to disasters and other life-threatening emergencies. The American Red Cross helps ensure that individuals, families and organizations are prepared for disasters and other life-threatening emergencies through developing and implementing lifesaving training and education programs and materials. An average of 7 million people a year receive Red Cross training in first aid, water safety and other skills that help save lives. Every community is safer thanks to the nearly 4 million people who train every year in Red Cross first aid, CPR and AED classes.

**Collecting, testing and supplying blood across our nation**

For more than 60 years, the American Red Cross has been committed to ensuring the availability of the safest possible blood and blood products to help meet America’s blood needs. Every two seconds, someone in the United States needs a blood transfusion. Thanks to the generosity of almost 3.6 million blood donors, the American Red Cross is the largest single blood supplier in the United States.
Partnering in International Services

The American Red Cross is one of more than 180 Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide that are devoted to alleviating human suffering wherever it is found. The members of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network—including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) and the Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies—work together toward common goals during times of crisis or disaster.

As a national society, the American Red Cross works within this framework to help provide services for the world’s most vulnerable people. The American Red Cross works with our partner Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in more than 30 countries to support projects in disaster management and emergency health. In the United States, local Red Cross chapters support efforts to reconnect families separated by international disasters, as well as educate the public about international humanitarian law.
Disaster Services

Each year, the American Red Cross responds to nearly 70,000 disasters, including single-family and apartment home fires (the majority of disaster responses), hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, wildfires, tornadoes, hazardous materials spills, transportation accidents, explosions and other natural and human-caused disasters.

Although the American Red Cross is not a government agency, its authority to provide disaster relief was formalized when, in 1905, the Red Cross was chartered by the U.S. Congress to “carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply the same in mitigating the sufferings caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same.” The charter is not only an assignment of responsibility, but also an obligation to the nation, to disaster victims and to the people who generously support our work with their donations.

Red Cross disaster relief focuses on meeting people’s urgent disaster-caused needs. When a disaster threatens or strikes, the Red Cross provides shelter, food, health and emotional support services, and bulk distribution of items to meet the basic needs of those affected. Red Cross workers also meet one-on-one with clients to provide information and assistance and to connect them to other resources that can help support their recovery.

Use of Social Media

In recent years, the use of social media has grown exponentially during a disaster as people rely on it to get updates, seek help, give help and connect with loved ones. As more and more people turn to social media to communicate during disasters, the American Red Cross has expanded its ability to engage with the public in emergencies by creating the Digital Operations Center, in partnership with Dell Inc. The public is a vital participant in emergency response and recovery. Members of the public often are the first responders to their own neighbors, and they can provide valuable information to the Red Cross and other response agencies. The Digital Operations Center already has enhanced the ability of the Red Cross to get information about disasters, anticipate relief needs through improved data and analytics and provide emotional support via the social web.

In conjunction with the Digital Operations Center, the Red Cross has launched a Digital Volunteer Program to build a group of online volunteers across the country who are trained to engage directly with the public during emergencies. Our digital volunteers answer questions and are a source of comfort and critical information. They spot trends, collect situational information and pass that knowledge back to the people making operational decisions. The Digital Operations Center, combined with digital volunteers, gives the Red Cross a greater capacity to listen, respond and connect to people in the social space. Our goal at the Red Cross is to become a social liaison for people, families and communities to support one another before, during and after disasters, and our digital activates help us do just that.

The American Red Cross is also able to facilitate family communication after a disaster through its Safe and Well website, found on redcross.org. The Safe and Well website allows individuals to register their well-being using messages that can be seen by family and friends inquiring about their loved one’s safety. The site also allows disaster victims to update their status on Facebook and Twitter during the registration process. If a loved one is not listed on the Safe and Well website and has a serious, pre-existing health or mental health condition,
family and friends can initiate an Emergency Information Request by calling their local American Red Cross chapter or 1-800-RED CROSS.

**Emphasizing Disaster Readiness**

Disasters deprive families of homes and belongings, cause major disruptions to businesses and cost billions of dollars. This immense social and economic impact can be dramatically reduced if families, businesses and communities take proactive steps to reduce their vulnerabilities. Therefore, disaster readiness and mitigation are priorities of the American Red Cross.

**Awareness and Education**

We develop and distribute a variety of materials in various languages to educate the public. This includes electronic capabilities, printed and video materials as well as public service announcements and community presentations that inform the public about how to stay safe and protect their homes.

**Direct Mitigation and Advocacy**

We have partnered with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, the insurance industry, emergency management and environment officials, educators, businesses and others who are concerned about the increasing, and often unnecessary, losses caused by disasters. Across the nation, we are working to build a “culture of preparedness” and to limit the harm inflicted on families and communities by disasters.

**Partnerships**

In times of disaster, we work with our partners locally and nationally to strengthen coordination with partners to meet client needs more efficiently and effectively. We enhance and increase our capacity through working together in mass care and sheltering. Our partners allow us to deliver services to clients by delivering expertise beyond the Red Cross to benefit our clients. We also have a number of partners who allow us to extend our reach and trust in diverse communities so the Red Cross can be inclusive and serve all disaster-affected survivors. The National Centers for Independent Living are among our many partners who add expertise to our work with functional needs survivors. We also work with Catholic Charities USA, the National Baptist Convention USA, NAACP and other organizations to extend our reach to assist all people affected by a disaster. We work with partners such as The Salvation Army to coordinate service delivery and the Southern Baptist Convention to increase our capacity.

A disaster survivor receives a hot meal at a Red Cross shelter.
Red Cross volunteers move a container of food during a disaster relief operation.
Service to the Armed Forces

The Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) program ensures that service members, veterans and their families have worldwide, around-the-clock access to timely and reliable humanitarian services. While providing assistance to 1.4 million active-duty personnel and their families, the Red Cross also reaches out to more than 2 million military members to include National Guard and Reservists, 23 million veterans and their families who reside in nearly every community in America. SAF services are delivered through the Red Cross chapter network in the United States and on military installations around the world.

The American Red Cross keeps pace with a changing military. The Red Cross sends communications on behalf of family members who are facing emergencies or other important events to members of the U.S. Armed Forces serving all over the world. Messages are delivered around-the-clock, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Emergency communications services have been provided to members of the military and their families for more than 100 years as part of the 1905 Congressional Charter that requires the American Red Cross to act “in accord with military authorities as a medium of communications between the people of the United States and their armed forces.”

The Red Cross works hand-in-hand with military hospitals and wounded warrior units, providing material assistance that is vitally needed for the comfort and recovery of service members. The Red Cross is assisting not only the service members currently in warrior transition units, but also those in veterans’ health care facilities, family members, and surviving spouses, as well. Our services improve the morale, welfare and general quality of life of hospital patients and provide family members with peace of mind. SAF staff also offer respite from harsh conditions and bring a little bit of home to the troops overseas by operating 24-hour canteen services with coffee, cold drinks, snacks, games, videos, books and Internet access.

Prior to deployment, Red Cross workers educate service members and their families regarding available Red Cross support services, including assistance they can seek during deployment. Both active-duty and community-based military rely on the Red Cross to provide access to vital services such as financial assistance, counseling, family support groups, information and referrals to medical professionals. The Red Cross introduced a course especially for military families entitled, “Coping With Deployments: Psychological First Aid for Military Families.” The course teaches resiliency strategies for families and includes a special module for children.

The Red Cross additionally supports veterans and their families by representing them before the Board of Veterans Appeals. Red Cross volunteers are certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to work in nearly every medical facility. They provide a wide range of support to veterans via community-based programs in addition to the traditional support veterans receive in VA medical centers.

A Red Cross comfort kit brings a touch of home to deployed service members.
Preparedness and Health and Safety Services

The American Red Cross has been a leader in helping people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters. Red Cross programs are guided by our Scientific Advisory Council, a panel of nationally recognized experts in public health and emergency preparedness. The council ensures that our programs and products meet the latest evidence-based scientific guidelines, as well as educational innovation and advancements.

Training, Products and Services

As the leader in first aid, health and safety training, and emergency preparedness, we provide a wide range of offerings, including First Aid, CPR/AED and Bloodborne Pathogens training, first aid supplies, AED purchases (including implementation and program support), corporate emergency preparedness programs and more.

American Red Cross Mobile Apps

The widespread availability and improvements in mobile technology created an opportunity for the Red Cross to develop a suite of mobile apps tailored to specific emergencies that people face, such as hurricanes, earthquakes or other disasters. Red Cross apps give people instant access to local and real time information on what to do before, during and after emergencies and disasters. People have used the content in our first aid app to control bleeding, care for broken bones and help people having seizures. Our hurricane app was used by thousands of people to get prepared, find Red Cross shelters or send ‘I’m safe’ messages during Hurricane Isaac and Superstorm Sandy. Learn about and download all of the American Red Cross apps at redcross.org/mobileapps.

Preparedness

Just as every disaster is an intensely personal experience, the American Red Cross believes that a commitment to making our homes, businesses and communities safe is also personal. Therefore, the Red Cross works closely with local, state and national partners to help people personalize their risk to disasters and other emergencies and make preparedness a personal priority. The goal is to build a “culture of preparedness” that helps communities become safer and more prepared when disasters strike. The Red Cross has numerous preparedness materials available in multiple languages.

Thousands of people prepare for emergencies each year by taking Red Cross classes.
A Red Cross volunteer provides relief supplies to a father and daughter affected by Superstorm Sandy.
Be Red Cross Ready

Be Red Cross Ready represents the cooperative efforts of the American Red Cross and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Ready Campaign to encourage the public to be more prepared for a disaster or other emergency. This program contains a simple message and call to action. In today’s climate, it is more important than ever that we all be prepared for possible emergencies, and there are three action steps everyone can take that can help make a difference.

1. **Get a Kit.** What you have on hand when a disaster happens can make a big difference. Have at least three days of supplies for everyone in your household, including your pets. Include any necessary items for infants, seniors and people with disabilities in your kit. Keep a smaller version of the kit in your vehicle. Information on what to include in a kit is available at redcross.org/BeRedCrossReady.

2. **Make a Plan.** Planning ahead is the first step to a calmer and more assured disaster response. Design a family communication plan that includes an evacuation plan and coordinates with schools, work and communities’ communication plans.

3. **Be Informed.** When a major disaster occurs, your community can change in an instant. Knowing what may happen and how you can help may make all the difference when an emergency happens. Make sure that at least one member of your household is trained in first aid, CPR and AED use.

To learn more about the Be Red Cross Ready initiative, go to an online presentation at redcross.org. The modules, which are available in English and Spanish, contain pictures, audio and video content that help individuals and their families become safer, healthier and more resilient in the face of an emergency.

**Ready Rating™**

The American Red Cross Ready Rating™ program is a free, self-paced, membership program designed to help businesses, organizations and schools become better prepared for emergencies. It is aligned with the federal government’s private sector preparedness standards (PS-Prep) and is delivered through a Red Cross branded website, ReadyRating.org. Members use a proprietary online assessment tool to get a baseline measurement of their preparedness level and receive a customized score card and a Next Steps Report. The Ready Rating Assessment measures the organizations’ level of preparedness in five key areas:

1. Leadership’s Commitment to Preparedness
2. Hazard Vulnerability Assessment
3. Emergency Plans
4. Education and Testing of the Emergency Plans
5. Helping Their Community Be Better Prepared

Members also have access to free tools and resources to help them improve their Ready Rating score. Tools include a Resource Center with sample documents, checklists and an Emergency Response Plan toolkit that enables them to create a thorough and customized Emergency Response Plan for the organization. The Red Cross First Aid Emergency Drills program is designed to test and strengthen a company’s emergency plan and training.
Blood Services

American Red Cross Blood Services touches many lives every day. The use of current medical technologies allows us to be a leader in transfusion medicine and to provide a variety of blood products for the hospitals and transfusion centers we serve. The American Red Cross and its Board of Governors have made a strong commitment to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure that regulatory compliance continues to be a top priority.

Safety First

Medical advances in blood donor screening and testing have dramatically improved blood safety. Changes in technology have also imposed enormous demands on blood centers. The National Testing Laboratories of the American Red Cross efficiently process and test donor samples and provide reliable results in a timely manner.

Quality Assurance Unit

Our Quality Assurance unit reviews the processes developed and used in Red Cross facilities to manufacture FDA-regulated products. The unit determines if the facilities meet appropriate regulatory and compliance standards. Quality Assurance utilizes the FDA’s Good Manufacturing Practice regulations.

The Quality Assurance unit examines donor eligibility screening practices; support systems, such as Red Cross testing laboratories and information technology; and functions at Biomedical Services headquarters. The unit analyzes data, prepares reports for Red Cross management and participates in various committees at Biomedical Services headquarters. Many of the unit’s activities are governed by the 2003 Amended Consent Decree with the FDA as well as the biologics and pharmaceutical sections of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Fast Facts

- Every day, the Red Cross relies on volunteer donors to give enough blood to help treat people with illnesses and injuries.
- The American Red Cross needs to collect approximately 17,000 units of blood each day to meet patient needs.
- Each year, the Red Cross collects more than 6 million units of blood, from 3.6 million volunteer blood donors.
- From these donations, the Red Cross distributes around 9 million blood products each year to patients at approximately 3,000 hospitals and transfusion centers across the country.
- This work is accomplished through the organization’s national network, composed of five divisions and 36 Blood Services regions.
- The Red Cross is the nation’s largest single supplier of blood and blood products.
Consent Decree

In April 2003, the Red Cross and the FDA reached agreement on terms of an Amended Consent Decree, which provides legal guidance on the handling of donated blood. Both organizations are committed to further enhancing the safety of America’s blood supply under the Amended Consent Decree.

- The nation’s blood supply is safer today than it has ever been.
- The Red Cross is committed to keeping the blood supply as safe as possible and to holding itself accountable to the highest standards set by regulators and the American public it serves.
- The Red Cross recognizes that there is no higher priority than, or acceptable excuse for, anything but full compliance.

Millions of blood donors give the gift of life at thousands of Red Cross blood drives each year.
International Services

Working within the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network, the American Red Cross helps vulnerable people around the world to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and life-threatening health conditions. American Red Cross international services focus on responding to disasters, building safer and more resilient communities and educating future humanitarians. American Red Cross efforts to accomplish these goals are reinforced by membership in the world’s largest humanitarian network, with more than 185 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and approximately 13 million volunteers, members and staff.

The American Red Cross helps build the capacity of our partner national societies by strengthening their leadership, financial management, volunteer networks and technical capabilities. In collaboration with global Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, the American Red Cross strives to empower volunteers and communities with valuable skills and education that can provide avenues for local populations to help themselves. To ensure that programs are comprehensive, efficient and sustainable, the American Red Cross establishes partnerships with other public and private organizations whose capabilities strengthen and complement our initiatives.

Responding to Disasters

The American Red Cross helps meet the urgent needs of those affected by disasters around the world by sending relief supplies, financial assistance and disaster specialists. By coordinating with the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network and other partners, we are able to quickly scale up efforts to address the urgent and longer-term needs of affected communities. Through the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network, the American Red Cross also works to locate loved ones displaced by war, natural disaster or civil unrest, and sends Red Cross messages between separated family members.

In the immediate aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the American Red Cross established the Haiti Assistance Program to provide emergency support for survivors and their communities. We have continued to contribute our resources and expertise in disaster management and development toward rebuilding and renewal. To date, the American Red Cross and its partners have helped 4 million people nationwide with housing; water, sanitation and hygiene; community health and disease prevention; livelihood enhancement; and disaster preparedness and mitigation programs.

Building Safer, More Resilient Communities

We also work with Red Cross and Red Crescent partners around the world to build safer, more resilient communities that are better prepared for future disasters. We work with communities to help them better understand the risks they face, develop action plans—such as evacuation routes and emergency shelters—and identify cost-effective early warning systems to better predict and react to threats. Where possible, we help communities identify ways to reduce their disaster risks, such as planting trees to protect against landslides, improving drainage systems and river embankments to protect against floods, or improving homes so they can better withstand disaster damage.

Because good health also increases the safety and resilience of a community, we also bring measles vaccinations and health education messages to community members all over the world. Over the last
decade, we have also supported the vaccination of more than 1 billion children against measles through our support of the Measles Initiative. Red Cross volunteers have played a critical role in measles vaccination campaigns by going door to door, reaching even remote communities, and educating mothers about the importance of vaccinating their children. With this level of progress, the possibility of eradicating measles is in sight. This past year, the Measles Initiative expanded its focus to help stop another easily preventable disease—rubella. Now, every time $1 is donated to the Measles & Rubella Initiative to vaccinate a child against measles, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) will match it with an additional 50 cents to add the rubella vaccine to the shot. This means that children who receive vaccinations will be protected against not just one, but two, diseases. The American Red Cross also supports initiatives that help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS while providing compassionate care and support to those already living with the disease.

**Educating Future Humanitarians**

The American Red Cross is engaging the country’s next generation of humanitarian leaders by increasing their understanding of the rules of war and respect for human dignity overall. Just as Red Cross and Red Crescent partners do in their countries all around the world, the American Red Cross teaches people in the United States about International Humanitarian Law. By providing teachers with easily integrated activities and lesson plans to facilitate discussions about complex issues, the American Red Cross is helping educate the next generation of humanitarians. American Red Cross chapters across the country also educate adults about the limits of war and the Geneva Conventions, which protect civilians, prisoners of war and wounded soldiers.
Fundamental Principles of the Global Red Cross and Red Crescent Network

As part of the Global Red Cross and Red Crescent Network, the American Red Cross follows these seven fundamental principles.

Humanity
The Red Cross born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavors, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all people.

Impartiality
It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavors to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality
In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Red Cross may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence
The Red Cross is independent. The national societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with Red Cross principles.

Voluntary Service
The Red Cross is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity
There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality
The Red Cross is a worldwide institution in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other.

Dakota carries a Red Cross clean-up kit as he helps his family recover after Hurricane Irene hit New York.
American Red Cross Volunteers

The American Red Cross has been able to provide help, comfort and services for more than 130 years because of the tireless and dedicated work of its volunteers. As a nonprofit organization, the Red Cross depends on volunteers and the generosity of the public to perform its humanitarian mission.

Across the United States, Red Crossers help save lives by providing assistance to disaster survivors, delivering community education courses, working with millions of volunteer blood donors, providing care and comfort to service members and veterans, or supporting a military family member. This special group of volunteers includes individuals who help with a single event or who volunteer several times a month. Some Red Cross volunteers have been involved in their communities for decades; others are younger and new to the organization.

Just as the people receiving Red Cross services are diverse, Red Cross volunteers represent different ages, backgrounds and skills. It takes all kinds of people to make this organization work: partnerships such as the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Association of Hispanic Nurses and the American Translators Association; students and young professionals who join as members of a Red Cross School Club or the Young Humanitarians Fundraising Program; and many more across the nation and on military bases around the world.

Volunteers can contribute in many ways, and each volunteer can navigate a unique path, spending their time serving in ways they enjoy. People become Red Cross volunteers because they want to help those facing an emergency, and often, they find their own lives changed in the process.

The Red Cross welcomes volunteers as individuals or as groups from a company or organization. For example, Ready When the Time Comes is a corporate volunteer program in which the Red Cross trains employees from partnering corporations and organizations and mobilizes them as a community-based volunteer force when disaster strikes. Some may have special skills, such as nurses or mental health professionals, while others come in with an eagerness to serve in any way they can.

Give Back to Humanity

Among other things, Red Cross volunteers:

- Assist victims of hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, winter storms, wildfires and home fires with shelter, food, comfort and other services.
- Share information via social media to help people be ready for an emergency—and deal with the aftermath of one.
- Help members of the military, veterans and their families.
- Provide training in first aid, CPR/AED, swimming, babysitter skills and other classes.
- Support blood drives to meet the needs of accident victims, cancer patients and others.
- Help people in the U.S. and around the world prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.
The Global Red Cross and Red Crescent Network

The Red Cross began in 1859, when Henry Dunant, a young Swiss man, came upon the scene of a bloody battle in Solferino, Italy, between the armies of imperial Austria and the Franco-Sardinian alliance. Some 40,000 men lay dead or dying on the battlefield. The wounded lacked medical attention. Dunant organized local people to bind the soldiers’ wounds and to feed and comfort them. On his return, he called for the creation of national relief societies to assist those wounded in war, and pointed the way to the future Geneva Conventions.

In October 1863, the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network was created in Geneva, Switzerland, to provide nonpartisan care to the wounded and sick in times of war. The Red Cross emblem was adopted at this first International Conference as a symbol of neutrality and was to be used by national relief societies. In August 1864, the representatives of 12 governments signed the Geneva Convention Treaty.

Today, the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network is composed of the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation), as well as national societies in more than 185 countries, including the American Red Cross.
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For more information about the American Red Cross,
contact your local chapter or visit redcross.org.