Fiscal Year 2013 is now behind us and Fiscal Year 2014, which started July 1, is well under way. The new year brings with it changes like Disaster Cycle Reengineering, which you’ll hear more about both in this newsletter and in the coming months. As we look back to see how we did in FY13, there are key highlights to celebrate.

Anyone looking at severe weather alerts can sense that local disaster events are on the rise and the numbers bear this out. Since 2009, our region has seen a 33% increase in the number of disaster responses. That includes earthquakes, tornadoes, derechos, winter storms, floods, and, of course, house fires. But how good a job are we doing when we respond to these disasters? Nearly 100% of the 250 Disaster Clients who responded to our surveys this year said that we did an excellent or very good job of helping in their recovery back to normal life after a major event. One hundred percent reported that we did an excellent or very good job of fulfilling their most immediate needs after a disaster. That is outstanding.

Volunteer Connection was implemented this year, giving volunteers a new avenue to stay connected with the American Red Cross and giving our leadership the ability to engage volunteers in new ways. This tool is helping us to bring new volunteers on board and invite volunteers we haven’t worked with in a while to get back involved with the American Red Cross. Today nearly 700 disaster volunteers are active in the region and I fully anticipate that this number will be over 1,000 by the end of FY14.

New partnerships like those with Feeding America and Goodwill, as well as nearly 1,000 others with sheltering sites and feeding operations, are positioning the region to do even more for our Disaster Clients. As we move into full ownership of the Disaster Cycle, from preparedness, response and recovery, we need more creative partnerships to help us fully support our Clients after a devastating event.

Finally, financial strength is always an important benchmark for a nonprofit. Our region exceeded its fundraising targets this past year by 5% and met a Mid-Atlantic Division goal to come in under the expense budget by 10%.

You are a huge part of our success. As we head into FY14, please continue your good work. Embrace the changes that will come with Disaster Reengineering. Invite others to come alongside you as volunteers. Help us build new partnerships. Consider making your own financial donation to keep our work going strong. We cannot do it without you.

Thank you.
I am excited to bring all of you up to date on what Disaster Cycle Reengineering means, and what it might look like for all of you, our disaster workforce, as we move forward.

In March 2012, the American Red Cross embarked on the most extensive effort in its history to improve our ability to deliver services throughout the Disaster Cycle, which is composed of Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. This effort, foundationally based in the client experience, utilized a team of expert practitioners and an extremely rigorous, data-driven, and process-oriented approach to establish a future direction for all mission-critical disaster program services.

The past 18 months of work have culminated in the development of a clearly aligned program, across each phase of the cycle, designed to meet the expectations of our clients and stakeholders, empower the Red Cross volunteers, support our regional chapter groupings, develop local community resources to provide services, strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, and leverage the division structure in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. This new focus and associated processes also explicitly reinforce the primacy of the volunteer workforce in the disaster cycle, and establishes a clear mechanism for scaling up for major disaster events while preserving the central role of the local unit.

So what does reengineering mean for you, our disaster workforce? The days of a “national operation,” meaning that all of the faces on the operation change, are past us. We have been empowered as a region to maintain our operational control while being supported as needed by our neighbors in the division and nationally. We have a scalable model that will look similar no matter what size the disaster operation: A local workforce helping local clients. We will be working with team members whom we have practiced with and responded with in the past. This will result in a smoother operation and a better experience for our local workforce and those who may be visiting from other regions to help us deliver our mission.

This reengineering effort also means that we now find ourselves working in all phases of the disaster cycle — Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

In Preparedness, we will be encouraging children to make a disaster kit and plan with their family; we will be sharing our preparedness messaging with community organizations during their regularly scheduled meetings; and we will be reaching out to independent living centers to ensure that they have an understanding of personal preparedness.

Continued on next page
“We are developing more opportunities for volunteers to take a leadership role in the chapter areas, regionally and in the division. These positions will be critical to our success moving forward.”
—Brian Keenum

In Response, we will continue to do what we have always done, meeting the emergency needs of our clients. In all phases of the cycle we will closely align with government agencies, maintaining and developing those relationships with local, state, and national agencies that can give us the best information about the needs of the communities. We will move our resources to best meet the needs of our clients, and meet unique needs by convening our partners in a meaningful way. We will ensure that our efforts at relief best meet the disaster scenario and listen to those that know those needs best, the clients.

In Recovery, our interaction with clients and community partners will continue not just while we are operating shelters or while the fire is still smoldering, but until those families that need us are established enough to continue on their own. Going beyond transactional client casework, we will work to refer clients to meaningful services that will continue to meet their material, health, and mental health needs as they get themselves back on track. We will mobilize the community to help meet the needs of our clients.

The most exciting part of reengineering is the renewed commitment to engaging our workforce. The expansion of our efforts to all three phases of the disaster cycle allow more opportunities for you to be involved in the delivery of our mission, whether it be in Preparedness, Response, or Recovery. We can grow our workforce because of these new opportunities, and support our current workforce with new and exciting training and exercises. We will also need supervisory and management candidates more than ever before to help lead this organization into the future. We are developing more opportunities for volunteers to take a leadership role in the chapter areas, regionally and in the division. These positions will be critical to our success moving forward, and will work alongside our paid staff to ensure that our programs continue to be reliable and repeatable in all areas of the Virginia Mountain Region, while being responsive to the differences that our geography dictates from chapter to chapter.

I would like to invite you to get to know more about the reengineering process and to become a leader in our disaster program. There is a lot of information on The Exchange about disaster reengineering, and your Disaster Services Program Managers all have opportunities available for volunteer leadership development. We will be learning together over the coming months, but I am confident in our team. We cannot fail if we remember one thing:

Our Clients.

Loss of One of Our Own

Michael H. (Mike) Gibson, 73, of Roanoke, died Sunday, June 23, 2013. Following his service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Mike enjoyed a successful career in the insurance business. Upon his retirement, Mike volunteered with the American Red Cross and spent countless hours assisting those affected by natural disasters. Mike was a Disaster Instructor and he took many courses over his Red Cross career to learn about Shelter Operations, Client Casework, CPR/First Aid, Disaster Assessment, Logistics, and Disaster Health Services.

According to Betty Whittaker, VMR Director of Volunteer Services, “Mike was always ready to deploy. He kept the Roanoke ERV in perfect condition, many times taking it home with him to wash and clean it. He always was an advocate for the Red Cross everywhere he went. Mike was quiet but impactful – always thinking about ways to work more efficiently and building a solid ERV team. He always took the job seriously and protected the Red Cross.”

Mike is survived by his son David and family in Roanoke, two sisters in Maryland and North Carolina, and one brother in North Carolina.
Volunteer of the Month: Alice Neece

By Anda Divine, Editor

After seven rounds of phone tag and several weeks of delays on both of our ends, I finally got to meet Alice Neece. It was a blisteringly hot day in August but she was an island of cool calm in the office of the Mountain Empire Chapter in Bristol, Virginia. Turns out, she’s usually like that.

Alice is the volunteer Coordinator of Disaster Volunteer Services and Staff Services for the chapter, work that she does full-time — five full days a week. She also supports regional disaster responses in southwest and western Virginia by activating and deploying volunteers for national responses. The Mountain Empire Chapter is one of the largest in the Virginia Mountain Region, with more than 70 active DAT volunteers covering nine and a half sprawling counties and two cities.

Alice was born and raised in Washington, DC. Her father was a U.S. Army engineer and her mother worked on, by today’s standards, primitive computers (“Keypunching!” Alice said). Alice, too, did keypunch and other data entry and bank bookkeeping work early in her career. She and her husband Jim Neece, a (now retired) systems analyst and also a DAT/ERV volunteer, moved to the Bristol area in 1973 because, she said, they didn’t want to raise their children in the Washington metro area. Then she stayed home for several years to raise their two sons.

“Coming here to the mountains was quite a culture shock after city life, but I quickly came to love it,” Alice said. “At first I was intimidated by the country roads. I used to get lost a lot, and I still do! But I’m always amazed at the small-town friendliness here. My neighbors taught me how to can all the vegetables and fruit we grow, for which I am so grateful.”

In the 1980s Alice was a cosmetology instructor and then owner of two beauty schools in Bristol, Tennessee and Abingdon, Virginia. “My students, all girls, were like my own kids,” Alice said. “They’d come to our house and really liven things up. Those were great years.”

A serious illness forced Alice to sell those two businesses in the early 1990s, and this shifted her life into an entirely new direction. After her recovery she became extremely active with the American Heart Association, doing volunteer fundraising work and frequent public speaking. At the Bristol Regional Medical Center, working alongside her own cardiologist, heart surgeon, and the BRMC staff, she became a volunteer counselor for people who were going to undergo heart procedures. “A person’s motivation is a large part of successful recovery, and I wanted to share that with people,” Alice said.

As for how she came to join the Red Cross, Alice said, “In 2005 I saw on TV the devastating effects of Katrina and I deeply wanted to find a way to help. Thousands of Katrina refugees were streaming north along I-81 and the Red Cross set up dozens of service centers along that corridor to help them. I simply walked into the Bristol office one day and asked if there was anything I could do. I wound up taking some classes and then did a lot of casework — we had 170 cases in our office alone.”

In October, 2005 Alice deployed to New Orleans and then to Baton Rouge, Louisiana for three weeks to do more casework. “That was very, very hard,” Alice said. “There were so many desperate people who needed help and we had to drive long distances into remote, sometimes dangerous bayous to get to clients’ homes. Once I got back home I couldn’t bring myself to come into the Red Cross office for a while, I was so stunned.” But Alice moved past that and is now again willing to deploy for distant DROs.

“Mentoring is extremely important within the Red Cross,” Alice said. “When you come back from something like [Katrina], you must have someone to talk to.”

Alice Neece has become one of those people.
The first Virginia Mountain Regional Disaster Training Institute was held at the Roanoke Valley Chapter office on June 13–16. The courses were of broad interest, ranging from basic courses like Disaster Assessment Basics and Client Casework, ERV: Ready, Set, Go, and Psychological First Aid; new courses like Shelter Fundamentals, Collaborating Essentials, and Logistics: An Overview, to only occasionally offered basic courses like Bulk Distribution, Emergency Operations Center/Incident Command Liaison, and advanced courses like Shelter Management, Disaster Frontline Supervisor and Simulation, and Disaster Instructor Specialty Training.

There were opportunities to get trained or updated on Adult CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and AED (automated external defibrillator), and First Aid certification at no cost to disaster volunteers. Rounding out the offering list were Public Affairs and Health Services Response workshops.

Some participants had a wonderful opportunity to immediately utilize some of the skills learned earlier that day, because later that first evening there was a huge traffic accident affecting I-81, and a multiple-unit apartment fire, giving some immediate hands-on experience thanks to Brian Keenum’s and Grady DeVilbiss’s quick thinking. They sent some of the newly trained Disaster Assessment and Client Casework Responders-in-Training to work on the two emergencies, adding on-the-job experience to the course training. This is the best way to learn: Hear-See-Do.

Of particular interest, we were able to offer Disaster Kitchen Training and utilized the “Spirit of America” (one of the two American Red Cross’s self-contained mobile kitchens) to prepare meals, and ERVs with newly trained drivers to deliver those meals, giving them additional

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**VMR Disaster Training Institute Provided Unexpected Hands-On Experiences**

By Pam Smith, VMR Regional Disaster Training Coordinator
Disaster Training Institute, continued

driving time and experience. The participants in other courses at the Institute were also able to partake of the meal prepared by the newly trained kitchen workers for Sunday lunch that day.

The participants attending the Institute were able to take between one and six courses, depending on the individuals’ schedules and interests during the four days and two evenings of training.

The Virginia Mountain Regional Disaster Training Institute was the brainstorm of Betty Whittaker and the Regional Disaster Training Team. The institute planners received so many Thank You’s for providing the opportunity for this local training opportunity that the Training Team is contemplating holding another Institute in March of 2014. +

Swing for Disaster Relief Golf Tourney a Success

The Roanoke Valley Chapter held its 27th Annual Swing for Disaster Relief Golf Tournament on June 27 at the Roanoke Country Club. Players enjoyed a round of golf as well as an awards ceremony and auction. Nearly $15,000 was raised and will provide relief for the individuals and families affected by disaster throughout the Roanoke Valley and the greater Virginia Mountain Region. Committee members Tom Turner and Thomas Bass commissioned, donated, and floated a large Red Cross in the middle of the pond at the Country Club. +

ARC Community Service: 2013 National Scout Jamboree in WV

By Linda Beard, Disaster Volunteer, Central Virginia Chapter (Charlottesville)

Expectation charged the atmosphere when we arrived at The Summit near Beckley, WV, where the American Red Cross provided valuable support services to the 2013 National Scout Jamboree. More than 40,000 lively boys and girls participated in river rafting trips, mountain climbing events, and earning badges of all types during the July 15–24 event. ARC volunteers transported water to drop-off points along numerous routes on or near The Summit, blanketing the area in ERVs and box trucks following the boys and girls handing out water.

More than 40,000 Scouts from all over the country, plus 300,000 visitors, attended the Jamboree.

It took many West Virginia ARC volunteers and employees and a good number of Virginia volunteers to provide the support services needed by the Scouts. Virginia’s own Barry Abromovage, who had just completed the Disaster Kitchen Training program, commanded the cook staff, and Roger Hudson helped with the ERV staff assignments. Joan Taylor, Marvin Taylor, Linda Beard, Linda Rice, Elizabeth Harris, and Charles Hamblin represented the Virginia Red Cross during the Jamboree. Each did their part to supplement the West Virginia staff. I was told that the Virginia team proved a very valuable part of the overall efforts and blended in with the West Virginia Red Cross staff in every way. Job well done, everyone! +
Charles (Chuck) Hamblin was presented with the Rusty Erskine Volunteer Award in August: “A volunteer who provides an extraordinary and exemplary contribution to the work of the Red Cross.”

Chuck is the type of volunteer that every organization hopes will come walking through their door – he’s committed and caring. He has a true spirit of giving of himself and his time to others. No matter when we call, he will drop what he’s doing and be there immediately to help someone who has lost their home in a fire, to pick up supplies from the far reaches of our region so that we can be prepared in our own area for a disaster, or even to delivering cookies all over the region for Volunteer Week.

Chuck has deployed many times to disasters all over the country and will stay for weeks at a time to help out in any capacity. I’ve seen him pack lunches at a school in Pulaski, drive the ERV to deliver meals, and help in shelters and warehouses, and he always has a smile. He is also the unofficial photographer on Disaster Relief Operations – he always takes along his camera and gets some really great shots of the other volunteers and some of the areas that have been devastated during a disaster. It’s always great for the other volunteers who didn’t have a chance to go out on assignment to get to see some of the pictures of places where he’s worked to take care of clients.

Chuck always promotes the Red Cross everywhere he goes. He has lots of Red Cross T-shirts that he wears, he has Red Cross stickers on his truck, and he tells everybody that he meets that he’s a Red Cross Volunteer! Every time I see Chuck when he’s in the office or in the warehouse working for us, I wish him a great day and he always says “I already have!”

**DAT Response to Violent June Windstorms in Roanoke Valley**

On June 13, winds estimated at 77 mph tore through Salem and Roanoke County, ripping out utility lines, blocking streets and roads, levering up sidewalks, and downing huge trees all over the area. Appalachian Electric Power estimated that 125,000 customers lost power in the storm. The Ivywood Apartments on Chaparral Drive in Roanoke were particularly hard-hit by downed trees, and Roanoke Valley Chapter DAT teams assisted seven families that had been displaced from that complex.

(L-R) Brian Keenum, Jim Garner, and Grady DeVilbiss assessing some of the storm damage at the Ivywood Apartments.
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Note to Our Readers:

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- **December 2013**: November 15
- **March 2014**: February 15
- **June 2014**: May 15
- **September 2014**: August 15

Please send your material to Anda Divine, Editor, at Anda.Divine@redcross.org

September is National Preparedness Month

In an emergency, every second counts. That’s why it’s crucial to have a game plan. This September, as part of National Preparedness Month, the American Red Cross encourages all Americans to develop a family game plan. Get started using the steps below:

- Download Apps
- Make a Plan
- Get a Kit

For more information, go to www.redcross.org/prepare/nationalpreparednessmonth