Gratitude for the gift of life

Every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. Carolyn Strzalka, a healthy and active student, never imagined she would be one of these people.

As the captain of her high school varsity soccer team, Carolyn was very conscious of her health and exercised regularly. She was headed to college in the coming months to start a new chapter of her life. Everything seemed to be going as planned until one day, she started experiencing sharp pains in her abdomen. Carolyn was told that she needed to have her gallbladder removed two days before starting school, but that she should recover enough to participate in welcome week activities.

“The day after I moved into my dorm room I knew something was not right. After not being able to keep any food down and almost fainting walking back to my dorm room, I called my mom and asked her to take me to the hospital.” Carolyn had been internally bleeding into her stomach for three days and had a very low chance of survival. “My red blood cell levels were at a third of what they should have been.” The doctors suggested she receive two blood transfusions, but cautioned that it may already be too late.

Defying the odds

Despite the odds against her, Carolyn persevered and credits the blood donations for helping save her life. Today, Carolyn volunteers at American Red Cross blood drives and also donates blood every 56 days.

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Staying safe from home fire emergencies

The Red Cross responds to a disaster approximately every 8 minutes, the majority of which are home fires. Our goal is to reduce the number of fire-related deaths and injuries in our nation by 25 percent by 2020. You can help keep your family safe with just two simple steps:

Practise your 2-minute drill. Make sure your family can safely escape a home fire in under 2 minutes.

Test your smoke alarms monthly. Make sure you and your family are alerted as soon as a fire is detected. If the smoke alarm isn’t working, change the batteries.

With the help of thousands of local partners, the Home Fire Campaign has installed 407,852 free smoke alarms and educated 549,343 youth. To date, the campaign has been credited with saving at least 102 lives. To learn more, please visit redcross.org/home-fire

Recovering, thanks to you

This September marks the first anniversary of one of the most destructive wildfires in California’s history—the Butte Fire. The blaze erupted on September 9, 2015 and changed the lives of more than 550 families, destroying homes and every belonging they worked so hard to obtain.

One year later, those affected are slowly getting back on their feet. The American Red Cross and many other organizations are supporting the path to recovery, which can be a confusing, emotionally draining and complicated process.

During a recent “recovery blitz,” Red Cross volunteers contacted every resident affected by the fire and made appointments to see if they still had any unmet needs. Caseworkers met one-on-one to go over their recovery plans, navigate paperwork and receive financial support.

“I can see the light at the end of the tunnel,” says David Cooper, Butte Fire survivor. “Meeting with the Red Cross is less stressful than trying to figure out everything on your own.”

Hope from the ashes

Each survivor has unique needs and the Red Cross focuses on tailoring recovery resources to meet those personal needs. “Dozens of victims were able to walk away with funds to further aid them in their recovery from the devastating fires,” says Debbie Calvete, Red Cross Butte Fire recovery lead.

This would not have been possible without the support and financial donations from our donors.

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“Gratitude for the gift of life” by Carolyn Strzalka

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Carolyn Strzalka

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“Recovering, thanks to you” by Kathy Pascoe

“I was hard hearing their stories of devastation and how their lives have been changed in the course of a very short time,” says Kathy Pascoe, Red Cross lead caseworker. “It was very touching to see smiles and even tears of joy when they received Red Cross funds.”

Disaster recovery is often measured in months and years; the Red Cross stays to provide hope, comfort and personalized tailored support during that entire time.

To find out how you can help others near and far recover from disasters like home fires and severe storms, please visit redcross.org/about-us/our-work/disaster-relief

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page 2

A message from the Regional CEO

What a year it’s been

I can hardly believe that by the time you receive this message I will be close to celebrating my one year anniversary. Time sure flies at the American Red Cross when you are busy, and this has been a full year starting with wildfires in California, to mudslides in the Northwest, to flooding in the South and East Coast. Throughout those times, I have had the privilege of having a front row seat on the incredible displays of compassion and support that Red Cross volunteers, donors and staff provide to people in need every day. Working hard is not a chore when you are doing it with high-quality people and for a noble cause.

Here’s to an uneventful year two—I know, I know, good luck with that!

Thank you,

Gary Strong
Regional Chief Executive Officer
American Red Cross

Serving America’s heroes, thanks to you

The American Red Cross Gold Country Region enthusiastically organizes and collects everything from snacks to personal hygiene items to provide care packages for our military and veterans. But have you ever wondered how these packaging make a difference?

Recently, former Marine Kenneth Moua was looking at photos on his cell phone of the military unit he served with. His buddy had just posted a photo of a group of Marines that he served with. When he received the photo, he thought it was a good idea to make care packages for the servicemen who were no longer with him. He also included a thank you note for care packages sent by Aerojet Rocketdyne, a sponsor of Operation Care Package.

What’s in a box? A care package helps make even the toughest days a little easier.

“A care package helps provide a small bit of comfort to someone who is away from home. It is great to know that the American Red Cross is supporting our military and veterans in such a meaningful way,” says Moua.

Here’s to you, Moua. Thank you for your support of Operation Care Package.

Will you become a Red Cross Champion today?

People in your community are in need of help and hope every day. By becoming a Red Cross Champion, you’ll join a special group of monthly donors whose compassion and generosity help provide immediate relief to people impacted by emergencies all year long.

Be a part of every response that helps neighbors in need. Learn more at redcross.org/champions or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS

American Red Cross

“Nothing’s more gratifying”

By the time Heath Wakeler retired from the Sierra-Delta Board of Directors in July, his accomplishments in 12 years with the American Red Cross exceeded what most volunteers hope to achieve in a lifetime.

“At first I wanted to become a Wilderness First Aid Instructor,” Heath remembers. “That led to being a certified instructor in First Aid, CPR and eventually Emergency Medical Responder certification.”

Rising up to make a difference

Heath next took a Disaster Action Team (DAT) member course, getting his first call the night he completed training. After helping that first family following a house fire and getting hugs of gratitude, Heath was hooked. Two years later he was the DAT Captain for Placer County, and estimates he has been on over 200 DAT calls ever since.

Heath was honorably discharged from the military in 1991 and has had the privilege of having a front row seat on the incredible displays of compassion and support that Red Cross volunteers, donors and staff provide to people in need every day. Working hard is not a chore when you are doing it with high-quality people and for a noble cause.

As he rose up through the ranks as an instructor and DAT leader, Heath was invited to participate in the Placer County Advisory Council, going from there to the Regional Board of Directors. He is certified in all aspects of shelter operations, teaches in the annual FireUp! training institute, and serves in a public information capacity during disaster operations like the Butte Fire in 2015.

“Disaster relief is what it’s all about for me,” says Heath. “Having the opportunity to interact with our clients and knowing that everyone else in the organization is behind you—that is the greatest satisfaction of all.”

“I do it for the hugs.”

To find out how to volunteer, please visit redcross.org/volunteer

Red Cross-trained lifeguards save a child’s life

It was a beautiful May afternoon at the Pirates Bay Waterpark in Baytown, Texas, when people started calling for a lifeguard. A small boy was floating face down in the water.

Lifeguard Joshua Barajas lost no time springing into action. After blowing his whistle twice to signal an emergency, he lifted 4-year-old Carlos Mendez onto the pool deck. Two fellow lifeguards quickly arrived to assist.

No time to lose

The little boy wasn’t breathing and didn’t have a pulse. Knowing there wasn’t a moment to lose, the three lifeguards put their training to use and performed CPR. With their unremitting efforts, Carlos’ lungs finally began working again. He was soon transported to the hospital and thanks to the lifeguards’ heroic efforts, made a full recovery.

You can be prepared

It may have been a harrowing ordeal for everyone at the pool that day, but the lifeguards’ extensive American Red Cross Lifeguarding, CPR and First Aid training paid off. The three lifeguards received the Red Cross Lifesaving Award, given to professional rescuers who save or sustain a life as part of one’s duty to respond.

Lifeguarding, CPR and First Aid training is available at all Red Cross locations. To learn more about how you can be prepared for a life-saving moment, visit redcross.org/takeaclass

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The American Red Cross Gold Country Region enthusiastically organizes and collects everything from snacks to personal hygiene items to provide care packages for our military and veterans. But have you ever wondered how those packages make a difference?

Recently, former Marine Kenneth Mena was looking at photos on his employers’ community service wall and discovered a photo of a group of Marines that he served with. Next to their photo was a thank you note for care packages sent by Aeropost Rock昀hyme several years before. It took him from a second to realize that the company he was now working with was a major sponsor of Operation Care Package, an effort of the American Red Cross Gold Country Region to collect goods and supplies for our military locally and abroad.

What’s in a box?
A care package helps make even the toughest days a little easier “L, along with members of the U.S. Armed Forces appreciate your passion and efforts in sending us care packages. All members of the U.S. Armed Forces are volunteers and we do our jobs without expecting any kind of rewards. We miss birthdays, holidays, and important events with our families. When we receive gifts from people like you, it makes even our toughest days a little easier. So thank you as much to everyone who participated in Operation Care Package for the Troops. God bless you and our U.S. Armed Forces.”

This year, we were able to collect items to fill more than 6,000 care packages which were distributed to five local military organizations, veteran hospitals and Joint Task Force-Bravo in Honduras.

If you have ever wondered how these packages make a difference?

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You can be prepared

If you are a Red Cross Champion and become aware of an emergency, you are encouraged to dial 9-1-1 and stay on the line until help arrives.

By the time Heath Wakelee retired from the Sierra-Delta Board of Directors in July, his accomplishments in 12 years with the American Red Cross encoded what most volunteers hope to achieve in a lifetime.

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“A single donation from an American Red Cross blood donor can help save up to three lives. Find out more at redcrossblood.org

Defying the odds

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Your support at work

40,500 overnight stays provided after home fires and other disasters

1,288,000 relief items delivered

1,491,000 meals and snacks served

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"Hope from the ashes" says Debbie Calzone, Red Cross Butte Fire recovery lead.

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