



**American
Red Cross**

Nursing Matters Past and Present

American Red Cross National Nursing Committee

60th Edition

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Red Cross Responds as Typhoon Halong, Hurricane Melissa Cause Catastrophic Damage in Alaska, the Caribbean

Molly Dalton

Two major disasters occurred at opposite ends of any climate considerations — one in Alaska, the other in the Caribbean — and the American Red Cross joined response efforts with other Red Cross Societies to help those impacted.

TYPHOON HALONG Hundreds of American Red Cross disaster workers traveled to Alaska after Typhoon Halong devastated coastal villages in western Alaska and forced the evacuation of as many as 2,000 people to safe shelter hundreds of miles away in Anchorage.

The Red Cross and partners provided shelter, food, emergency supplies, emotional support and health



Red Crosser Dale Kunce looks at damage in the heavily-damaged village of Kipnuk, Alaska. Halong's high winds and storm surge left a catastrophe. Officials estimate that 90% of the structures in the community were destroyed. Most of Kipnuk's residents evacuated on military helicopters in the days after the storm. Photo by Scott Marder/American Red Cross.

services. One of the top priorities was finding housing for those affected, and the Red Cross and state and local partners worked together to make sure evacuees were able to move to non-congregate shelter options.

To help cover urgent expenses, the Red Cross also offered financial assistance to impacted households which can help with urgent needs like clothing, lodging and transportation, to longer-term essentials like securing new housing and making home repairs.

In addition to helping people in the shelters in Anchorage, the Red Cross also deployed disaster teams to impacted villages to deliver relief supplies before winter sets in. Emergency responders warn that some villages may need to be completely rebuilt, that it could take up to 18 months before some families can return — if at all.

HURRICANE MELISSA In Jamaica and Cuba, the damage was catastrophic after Hurricane Melissa swept across the islands.

The American Red Cross deployed several trained international responders, part of the International Disaster Response Team, to support processes including cash assistance, communications, relief response, planning and monitoring, and is working with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to mobilize additional support as needed in the coming days and weeks.

JAMAICA Hurricane Melissa, the strongest Hurricane to ever hit Jamaica — and the third largest storm to ever be recorded in the Caribbean — has caused widespread destruction across the country. There are some areas that are still completely inaccessible. People are desperately in need of the most basic amenities, having had their entire lives shattered, blown into the wind.

Jamaica Red Cross staff and volunteers are facing immense challenges reaching affected areas due to downed power lines, flooding and impassable

roads. It took some volunteers several days to even reach their local Red Cross branch office to support humanitarian aid distribution, because the areas surrounding their homes were so badly damaged.

Despite the difficulties, Red Cross teams have started distributing goods to affected communities, including food packages, water and items like tarpaulins, shelter kits, hygiene kits, cleaning kits and jerry cans. The needs are so vast it is impossible to reach everyone who needs support right now, so teams are focusing on individuals and communities who are most vulnerable.

CUBA Hurricane Melissa left heartbreaking humanitarian consequences across eastern Cuba. As many as a million people are in urgent need of assistance, particularly shelter materials, non-food items, safe water access and health protection. More than a million homes are damaged or destroyed.

The Cuban Red Cross has over 35,000 volunteers



In Granma, Cuban Red Cross volunteers carry out search and rescue operations amid widespread destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa. The hurricane devastated coastal and rural communities across eastern Cuba, affecting more than 2.7 million people. Cuban Red Cross photo.

active across the country, highly trained in relief, search and rescue, disaster response and risk reduction. Tons of relief supplies shipped by the IFRC have arrived in Cuba which the Cuban Red Cross will distribute in the hardest hit areas.

Beyond Disaster Relief: How the Red Cross Honors Culture Amid Crisis

Molly Dalton

When disaster hits, the American Red Cross is known for providing shelter, food and comfort. But in the face of extraordinary crises, the organization often goes far beyond the expected — meeting not just physical needs, but emotional and cultural ones too.

Typhoon Halong: Healing Through Heritage in Alaska

In October, the remnants of Typhoon Halong devastated Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, rendering entire coastal villages uninhabitable. Evacuees — many of them Yup'ik — were airlifted to Anchorage, hundreds of miles from their ancestral homes and traditions.

Recognizing the cultural trauma of this



The University of Alaska food staff prepared traditional dishes for shelter residents — fish soup and seal meat. People also joined together in traditional dances. Both were seen as vital for healing.

displacement, the Red Cross responded with more than cots and meals. Volunteers were trained in cultural sensitivity. Signage was printed in Yup'ik. Traditional foods like fish soup and seal meat were served. Community dances were held. Even the welcome baskets were thoughtfully curated — filled with reindeer salami, dried fruits, and pilot bread, a staple of Alaskan life.

In a powerful act of solidarity, Kotzebue hunter Collins J. Fleming Sr. donated three seals and an otter to the shelters. "A good seal can feed a family for a week," he said. "It brought me joy to bring a taste of home to those so far from it."



Collins J. Fleming Sr., a hunter from Kotzebue, Alaska, shared his harvest of three seals and an otter with the residents staying at the Red Cross shelters in Anchorage.

Much of the traditional subsistence food gathered by western Alaska residents was destroyed during the storm. Collins' donation

not only nourished evacuees, but also reconnected them to a sense of identity, belonging and home.

California Wildfires: Speaking the Language of Relief

Earlier in 2025, the Eaton and Palisades wildfires tore through Los Angeles County, destroying over 16,000 structures and displacing thousands. The Red Cross mobilized 500 responders and thousands of local volunteers to provide shelter, food and financial aid.

But again, the needs went deeper.

Helping communities recover after a disaster is a team effort, and the Red Cross works closely with partners to meet the most critical needs and ensure people are not overlooked. In Alhambra, Max Sanchez canvassed churches, markets and fire stations to connect displaced Latino families — many unaware of available aid — with Red Cross services. By bridging language and cultural barriers, Max and his team ensured that no one was left behind.

American Red Cross Nurses Receive Florence Nightingale Medals at NHQ Reception

Rebecca Harris-Smith and Debby Dailey were presented with the Florence Nightingale Medal by American Red Cross Chief Nurse Linda Fahey at a reception held at Red Cross National Headquarters in September.

Also attending the reception were friends and

The Red Cross also awarded a Response Impact Grant to Radio Bilingue to support the development and broadcast of Spanish language messaging to affected populations, helping ensure information was passed on about the relief and recovery services available for them to access.

Putting Communities and Their Unique Needs First

These stories reveal a deeper truth: no two disasters are alike, and neither are the people affected.

The Red Cross is dedicated to meeting both the immediate needs of survivors, as well as their cultural, emotional, and long-term recovery needs.



Max Sanchez, a leader with the Red Cross Latino Engagement Team (LET), worked tirelessly during the LA wildfires to get the word out to Latino and Hispanic communities that Red Cross help was available.

That includes:

- Financial assistance for urgent needs like clothing, lodging, and transportation.
- Recovery grants to local organizations for services like mold remediation and home repairs.
- Community partnerships that ensure no one is overlooked — especially in underserved or hard-to-reach populations.

In every crisis, the Red Cross recognizes that disaster relief isn't just about what's needed — *it's about what matters.*

Laurie Willshire, MPH, BSN, RN

family of the recipients, Red Cross National Nursing Committee members, and representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the National Black Nurses Association, and other nursing organizations.

Prior to the ceremony, the medal recipients were

guests at the Women in Leadership luncheon hosted by the Tiffany Circle, and were recognized during the program.

The Florence Nightingale Medal is awarded by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) every two years to nurses and nursing aides who are “active members or regular helpers of a National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society or of an affiliated medical or nursing institution.” Recipients must “have distinguished themselves in time of peace or war by:

- exceptional courage and devotion to the wounded, sick or disabled or to civilian victims of a conflict or disaster; [or]
- exemplary services or a creative and pioneering spirit in the areas of prevention, public health or nursing education.”

The maximum number of medals that can be awarded in a given cycle is 50; in 2025, there were 35 recipients from 17 countries.

In presenting the Florence Nightingale Medal to these two exceptional nurses, Linda Fahey made the following remarks about Debby Dailey, a nurse volunteer from the Central California Region (Central Valley Chapter):

Debby’s journey with the Red Cross began in 1980, inspired by her grandmother—a “Gray Lady”—and her own family’s experience after a home fire. A former firefighter and a registered nurse, Debby has responded to 8–10 disasters annually for over four decades. Her service spans wildfires, floods, mass shootings, hurricanes and earthquakes—always with a humanitarian heart and a “get up and go” spirit.

Her impact was especially profound during the

response to Super Storm Sandy and the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, where she led efforts to support grieving families with strength and compassion.

Debby has also been a tireless advocate for clients in remote areas, ensuring access to critical resources and financial assistance.

Beyond disaster response, Debby has educated countless healthcare professionals and nursing students, integrating disaster preparedness into nursing education.

Her mentorship has cultivated a new generation of nurses committed to service, and her leadership has inspired innovative fundraising efforts—like the unforgettable “Fill the Boot” campaign that raised \$24,000 for wildfire survivors.

Linda then presented the award to Rebecca Harris-Smith, who is affiliated with the Louisiana Region (American Red Cross of SE Louisiana), with this introduction:

Rebecca’s journey began with a love for education, which she seamlessly integrated into her nursing career. As a faculty member and dean, she has shaped the future of nursing education. Her leadership within the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) has been transformative, especially in strengthening partnerships with the American Red Cross.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Rebecca turned a moment of misunderstanding into a mission of collaboration. She joined the Red Cross National Nursing Committee and championed annual blood drives to support individuals with sickle cell disease. Her advocacy has led to lasting organizational change and increased awareness of the need for diverse blood donors.

Rebecca has also expanded opportunities for



Debby Dailey and Rebecca Harris-Smith, wearing their new Florence Nightingale Medals. Photo by Dermot Tatlow/American Red Cross.

nursing students through the Red Cross Academic Service-Learning program, ensuring that education meets community needs. Her efforts have deepened the Red Cross's engagement with Black communities, enhancing access to disaster preparedness, resilience training, and health services.

Linda closed her remarks by encouraging attendees to honor the legacy of Florence Nightingale by “continuing to uplift, support and honor the nurses who make a difference every day.”

American Red Cross nurses Harris-Smith and Dailey have done and continue to do just that with their years of dedication and service. We congratulate them on their recognition by the ICRC with this award, the highest international honor for nurses.

Read the ICRC's announcement about the 2025 Florence Nightingale Medal recipients [here](#).



At the Women in Leadership luncheon, from left to right are American Red Cross nurses: Linda Fahey, Chief Nurse; Carolyn Nganga-Good, Vice Chair, NNC; Debby Dailey and Rebecca Harris-Smith, 2025 Florence Nightingale Medal recipients; Sue Hassmiller, Senior Ambassador for Nursing and Health; Donna Mazyck, Chair, NNC; and Linda MacIntyre, Senior Nursing Consultant and former Chief Nurse.

The American Red Cross National Nursing Committee Laurie Willshire, MPH, BSN, RN

The [American Red Cross National Nursing Committee \(NNC\)](#) is an important part of Red Cross Nursing and Health. The NNC was established in 1910, with Jane Delano as its first chair. Local and state committees were also established. The NNC supported and guided nursing involvement in all Red Cross services. Over time, the NNC was eliminated and then reestablished. The most recent NNC has functioned continuously since 1992.

The NNC supports nurse recruitment, engagement and partnerships that represent communities served by the Red Cross. This diverse and committed group includes many nationally recognized leaders in our profession.

Current members include Red Cross nursing and business line leaders as well as representatives from national nursing and health organizations. We will be spotlighting individual members in future newsletters, but here is a listing of current NNC members:

Gretchen Brummel: Representative for rural pharmacies

Lynn Crabb: Senior Director, SAF Policy and Programs, American Red Cross

Donna Dorsey: Senior Nursing Consultant, American Red Cross; Volunteer Coordinator,

DSHR/HS, American Red Cross

Linda Fahey: Chief Nurse, American Red Cross

Bradley Goettl-Ng: Chief Nursing Officer, American Nurses Association

Shannon Goodhue: Senior Program Manager, Mental Health, American Red Cross

Grace Grau: Representative for the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN)

Constance (Connie) Griffin: Representative for the National Association of School Nurses (NASN)

Rebecca Harris-Smith: Representative for the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA)

Susan Hassmiller: Co-chair, Advisory Committee for Community Adaptation Program, American Red Cross

Tara Heagle: Representative for the Alliance of Nurses for Health Environments (ANHE)

Linda MacIntyre: Senior Nursing Consultant, American Red Cross; Former American Red Cross Chief Nurse

Donna Mazyck: Chair, NNC; Former Executive Director of the National Association of School Nurses

Yvette Miller: Executive Medical Officer, Donor and Client Support Center, American Red Cross

Carolyn Nganga-Good: Vice Chair, NNC; Chair, NNC International Services Subcommittee; Red Cross Measles & Rubella Initiative Representative; Representative for the Association of Public

Health Nurses

Rick Schofield: Regional Disaster Programs Officer, American Red Cross

Dorothy Sawyer: Director, National Nursing Network, American Red Cross

Shawna Sisler: Senior Program Manager for Disaster Health Services, American Red Cross

Cynthia Vlasich: Senior Nursing Consultant, American Red Cross; Former American Red Cross Chief Nurse

Carol Weingarten: Represents Nurses on Boards Coalition (NOBC) and National Student Nurse Association (NSNA)

Laurie Willshire: Executive Assistant to the Chief Nurse; NNC Awards Subcommittee Chair, American Red Cross

April Wood: Former President and CEO, National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster (NVOAD)

Why I Help: Volunteer Anthony Susi Believes Red Cross Shows Others the Path to Resilience

Sharon J. Alfred

Anthony Susi is a Red Cross volunteer since 1997, now serving with the Delmarva Chapter in Wilmington, Delaware.



Anthony Susi (at left) remarked, "I have been honored to work with the most selfless and caring people who are the Red Cross volunteers. He deployed to Kentucky where he served as Disaster Mental Health lead during the flooding in the western part of the state. He is pictured with fellow volunteers Robert Atterbernd (middle) and Chuck Shapiro (at right), both part of the Disaster Disability Integration team.

Susi has 8 GAPs (Group/Activity/Positions), but his primary position is Disaster Mental Health. GAP is the area of responsibility to which a volunteer is assigned. DMH teams respond to the psychosocial and emotional needs of people affected by disaster, which can also include other Red Cross disaster workers.

In 1996 Susi was working as a social worker in New York City for a hospital which specialized in end-of-life care. There was a disaster involving a plane crash which resulted in more than 200 fatalities. A call went out for advisors familiar with bereavement care experience.

He recalled, "I was at JFK airport providing

support, and I saw Red Crossers also providing support and care. I was impressed with their examples of care and professionalism. A colleague who was with me and I decided to explore joining the Red Cross. I eventually became a volunteer in 1997 and have remained an active volunteer ever since."

In 2021, Susi retired and moved to Delaware, where he took on more roles in the Delmarva Chapter. Besides being an active participant in the chapter's Disaster Action Team (DAT), he has been deployed more than 20 times all over the nation; in fact, Susi was deployed three times just this year. Not surprisingly, he has witnessed many instances of the "human will to survive in the face of disaster."

Last year Susi deployed as a shelter supervisor to Port Charlotte, Florida after Hurricane Helene. However, another big storm — Hurricane Milton — was headed their way. It was determined that this shelter was too close to the Gulf and would not survive a direct hit from the oncoming Hurricane Milton

"I had to assist in closing that shelter and relocating all the residents to a more secure site further inland in Punta Gorda," he recalled. "Helping those



While deployed to Maui after the island's devastating wildfires, Anthony Susi enjoyed Goat Yoga, one of the services provided for the volunteers to unwind.

who had already experienced one trauma was challenging, but it was also very rewarding as these shelter residents were so appreciative of Red Cross workers' care and support."

Susi enthused, "I have established enduring friendships, and I'm always thrilled to meet and reconnect with other Red Crossers that I have worked with in past deployments. I have been honored to work with the most selfless and caring people who are the Red Cross volunteers."



Anthony Susi (at right) and Essie Hopkins deployed to Kentucky after the devastating flooding in the western part of the state.

Heroes Helping Heroes

Have you ever wondered how some organizations manage to do all they do? The answer is volunteers. They're the ones who get up in the middle of the night, show up during emergencies, regardless of weather, track down the right contacts and resources, and share vital information and referrals, all in the name of helping others.

Those volunteers, along with partner institutions and donors are the backbone of the American Red Cross. Recently, we visited the Miami Veterans Administration Hospital with Jeff Wheatley, one of those quiet, dedicated and committed volunteers. He's the kind of person who makes sure things not only work but work right.

Jeff, a U.S. Army veteran, hasn't stopped serving. He runs the volunteer office of the Red Cross within the Miami VA facility. To top it all off, he is working on his bachelor's degree in nursing. Service is in his DNA.

Everyone is familiar with the images of nurses tending to survivors on a battlefield or in a field hospital, holding IV bags, changing bandages, or holding someone's hand to ease their loneliness. Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, was one of those nurses during the Civil War. Her legacy is alive and well and lives on in



Jeff Wheatley, U.S. Army veteran and Service to the Armed Forces volunteer, Jeff Wheatley continues his service at Bruce W. Carter Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Pedro Suarez, South Florida Region
people like Jeff.

At the Miami VA, volunteers like Jeff perform tasks that might seem trivial to some, but for others, those tidbits of help are indispensable when it comes to providing comfort to our veterans.

Supporting veteran hospitals is one aspect of how the Services to the Armed Forces (SAF) department helps active-duty service members, veterans and their families. Additionally, SAF fulfills needs ranging from emergency communications to access to financial assistance, information and referral services. At the Miami

VA, Jeff runs a weekly coffee station where visitors can get a free cup of coffee while waiting for their appointments. In Broward, SAF volunteers host a Bingo night, and in Palm Beach, SAF sponsors an ice cream cart for veterans.

Catching up with Jeff at the VA, he offered a tour of the immense Miami facility, which sponsors several clinics in Monroe, Dade and Broward counties that serve our unsung heroes. One highlight of the tour was visiting the greenhouse, where several veterans tended to plants using tools and supplies provided by the Red Cross.

Whatever the challenge, 24/7, the Red Cross is there for past, present and future military members and their families.

Join the Red Cross Holiday Campaign

Jennifer Warga

As caregivers and advocates, nurses, other healthcare professionals and nursing students demonstrate the power of compassion every day. The work of the Red Cross — responding to disasters, supporting military families, collecting lifesaving blood — is made possible by compassionate donors and volunteers like you. This holiday season, we're celebrating your impact with special gifts, matching opportunities, and a look back at what we accomplished together in 2025.

Special Gifts for Generous Donors

We know nurses and other healthcare professionals give so much of themselves every day. Now, we're giving something back:

- **Black Friday & Cyber Monday exclusive:** Donors who give **\$75 or more** can receive a **Red Cross beanie** – with warm thanks for your generosity and care. (Supplies limited)
- **Multi-Tool for Everyday Heroes:** Donate **\$125 or more** during the holiday campaign and receive a versatile **Red Cross multi-tool**.

It's our way of saying thank you for helping us deliver help and hope.

Double Your Impact

Thanks to generous corporate sponsors, your donation goes twice as far on **Matching Gift Days**. Matching gifts doubles your impact and helps us reach even more people in need. Our first matching gift day takes place December 2, Giving Tuesday, but don't worry if you miss it – we'll have more matching gifts through New Year's Eve!

Celebrate Your Community

The Red Cross regions have launched their annual **Year in Review** webpages to share stories of the incredible work done in local communities in 2025. Visit your region's homepage to see how your support made a difference close to home.

How You Can Help

Here's how to get involved:

- **Donate online** at redcross.org/NMgift
- **Give on a Matching Gift Day** to double your impact.
- **Tell friends, family and colleagues** about the Red Cross.
- **Explore your local Year in Review page.** ([Find your local Red Cross region here!](#))

Thank you for being part of our mission. Together, let's make this a season of hope and humanity.



AMERICAN RED CROSS National Nursing Committee
Heritage Sub-Committee Members: Elizabeth Kazmier, Editor; Molly Dalton; Bill Darr; Donna Dorsey; Linda Fahey; Cheryl Schmidt; Corie Story; Mark Tannenbaum; Laurie Willshire



Help us connect with and recognize other current and former Red Cross Nurses!

Please send the email, phone, and address of your friends and colleagues to us at RedCrossNurse@redcross.org. Share this newsletter via email and/or your preferred social media. Go to <http://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/nursing-health/nursing-network> and select a link under "View Previous Issues." **Thank you!**