



**American  
Red Cross**

# Nursing Matters Past and Present

American Red Cross National Nursing Committee

58th Edition

Spring 2025

## Celebrating Nurses Month!

**Linda Fahey, DNP, RN, CENP**



Chief Nurse Linda Fahey

As the Chief Nurse for the American Red Cross, I can think of no greater professional reward during this celebration month than to reach around our virtual table and thank each of you for the contribution that you make every day achieving our vision.

As with any celebration of nursing and especially within the Red Cross, that celebration and recognition also extend to our health professional colleagues who walk in-step with us in meeting this vision. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the 15,447 health and mental health volunteers as well as our Red Cross employed health professionals for helping us promote health and resilience within our communities.

***The vision for Red Cross Nursing and Health is: Ensure a prepared, nimble and diverse workforce of engaged Red Cross nurses and other health professionals enterprise-wide that supports volunteerism across the lifespan and promotes health and resilience within our communities.***

Since last celebrating this special month in 2024, you have been busy! You provided health services to people impacted by Hurricanes Beryl, Debby, Helene and Milton, as well as those suffering during fires across the country including the

tremendous disaster in California to kick off 2025. This spring, floods and tornadoes have been relentless across the Midwest and South and you have been there to care. You have also filled countless other roles within the Red Cross — helping secure the nation's blood supply, providing life-saving apheresis services across the country, supporting our military and their families, providing lifesaving training to our communities, advocating for the Measles and Rubella Initiative, and serving as leaders within the Red Cross. Many of you juggle multiple roles to help achieve the mission. During this special month, we look back and celebrate all that you have achieved. Thank you!!

In the true spirit of volunteerism, one of our key humanitarian principles, this month is also a time to look forward and prepare. The United States experienced a major disaster every 4 days in 2024. 2025 may be outpacing that trend. While our work is important in every service that we provide, the need is growing in Disaster. If you are able, please consider adding to your toolbelt of skills by completing the Disaster Health Services training so you can respond in your community, your region, or even help outside your region. Together we can carry on the proud tradition of Red Cross Nursing and answer this call, this challenge to serve with confidence that next year for Nurses Month, we will once again celebrate our tremendous successes. Happy Nurses Day, Week and Month!

Please join us as we celebrate together with a special guest speaker on May 14.

## A Conversation with IFRC Lead Volunteer and President, Kate Forbes

Join us for a conversation with Kate Forbes, lead volunteer and president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). A long time American Red Cross and IFRC volunteer, Forbes was elected president of the IFRC

in December of 2023, only the second woman to hold this position. Her travels to visit with the Movement's volunteers —there are 16 million of us—have taken her all over the world, including areas of conflict such as Gaza and Ukraine, and she

has seen firsthand how our work has been impacted by recent funding changes in the humanitarian sector. There will be ample time for questions.

This event will take place on **Wednesday, May 14, 2025, from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. ET.** [Use this link to register](#) to attend this conversation on Microsoft Teams.

## Measles and Rubella Partnership Has Saved 57 million+ Lives

Molly Dalton

World Immunization Week was observed from April 24 to April 30 under the banner 'Immunization for All is Humanly Possible' with an aim to ensure even more children, adolescents, adults – and their communities – are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases.

The [Measles & Rubella Partnership](#) (M&RP), of which the American Red Cross is one of the founding partners, is a global effort to eliminate these two diseases through vaccinations. Founded in 2001, the M&RP is led by the American Red Cross, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, the United Nations Foundation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF, the World Health Organization and IA2030. The aim is to vaccinate children across the globe in hopes of erasing these devastating diseases.

**AROUND THE WORLD** Since 2001, more than four billion children have been immunized against measles in over 88 countries, reducing global measles deaths by 82%.

The Red Cross has contributed millions of dollars toward campaigns and the purchase of vaccines and materials and plays a pivotal role in vaccination campaigns worldwide. Local volunteers use mass media, rallies, door-to-door visits and educational entertainment to reach families who do not have access to routine health services. Whether in distant villages or urban settlements, these campaigns may be the only way for children to receive this lifesaving vaccine.

Through partnerships with Red Cross and Red



Patrick, age 3, and Patience, age 18 months, play outside a home in rural Zambia in May 2023. Both kids were caught up on their routine vaccinations, thanks to their moms' determination and the healthcare workers in town. Patrick, Patience and thousands of other children in this region received house calls from Red Cross volunteers trying to identify un- or under-vaccinated kids. Via a program sponsored by the American Red Cross and the Zambia Red Cross, teams visited parents in both rural villages and urban settlements to find pockets of children missing routine immunizations—such as the measles vaccine. Photo by Brad Zerivitz/American Red Cross

Crescent national societies, local volunteers are mobilized and trained to conduct home-to-home visits among their neighbors, providing information to caregivers on vaccination campaigns and encouraging the vaccination of children.

Since 2001, the American Red Cross and our partners in the [Measles & Rubella Partnership](#) have vaccinated children in places such as Kenya, Benin and Ethiopia to protect them from these deadly diseases. It costs about \$2 to vaccinate a child against measles and rubella, making it one of the most cost-effective health interventions available.

**MEASLES A HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS VIRUS** Measles is easily spread by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing. In 2000, measles was a top five cause of death of children under the age of 5 years, with over a million deaths annually.

Complications from measles can include pneumonia, blindness, encephalitis and diarrhea. Rubella is generally a mild disease but can have serious consequences for pregnant women and their children. Pregnant women can pass rubella to their fetuses resulting in Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS), often resulting in multiple birth defects including heart problems, deafness and blindness.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP** [Learn about this important effort here.](#) It only costs \$2 to vaccinate a child against both measles and rubella. Please consider donating today to support this important effort.

## Busy Disaster Season Ahead – Make Your Emergency Plans Now Molly Dalton

We could be facing an extremely active Atlantic hurricane season and above-normal wildfire season in the coming weeks and months as the climate crisis increases the risks for both.

In their [2025 report](#), Colorado State University hurricane researchers predict an above-average Atlantic hurricane season with 17 named storms of which nine will become hurricanes and as many as four could reach major hurricane strength with sustained winds of 111 miles per hour or greater.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports increased heat, extended drought and lack of woodland moisture are key drivers in the higher chance of wildfires occurring.

**IMPORTANT TO BE PREPARED** Long before a major disaster happens, the Red Cross gets ready to help. In light of the predictions of very active hurricane and wildfire seasons, we urge everyone to get ready too. And don't forget — hurricanes can cause devastating flooding both along coastal areas and hundreds of miles inland, as occurred with Hurricane Helene last year.

Decide how to best protect your home. Plan how you will evacuate and how you will shelter safely at home. Take these simple steps and be ready:

- You and members of your household should have a plan to evacuate and a plan to shelter safely at home. Your evacuation plan should



"I thought I was going to die the night of the hurricane," said Kirk Herschell. "I really did." Kirk recounted his experience to Johanna Linnersten, Disaster Health Services volunteer nurse in a Red Cross shelter in Hudson, Florida during last year's Hurricane Helene. "I was sleeping in a chair outside my house after the hurricane had passed through," he says, "and I felt the water lapping up my legs. The water from the storm surge came in so quickly, and soon everything was flooded. I saw my neighbor float past on a blow-up mattress. Everything at my house is ruined, it's all gone." Photo by Marko Kokic/American Red Cross

include knowing where you'll go, how you'll get there, and where you'll stay. Your stay-at-home plan should focus on gathering the right supplies so that you can live safely without power, water, gas, phone or internet for a long time.

- Families may need to evacuate quickly with little notice. Create a plan that includes how you'll stay connected with each other, where you'll go, how you'll get there, and where you'll stay.
- Sign up for free emergency

alerts from your local government, which will include important information such as evacuation orders in an emergency.

- Download the free Emergency app for weather alerts, open Red Cross shelter locations and safety steps for different emergencies. Choose whether you want to view the content in English or Spanish with an easy-to-find language selector. To download, search "American Red Cross" in app stores, or go to [redcross.org/apps](https://redcross.org/apps).

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** The American Red Cross has been operating in a state of constant response with a new major disaster striking the U.S. every 15 days. We are responding to more large disasters — almost twice as many — than we did a decade ago.

This means there is a crucial need for more volunteers trained and ready to support families facing their darkest moments. Consider putting on a red vest and joining us. Visit [redcross.org/volunteertoday](https://redcross.org/volunteertoday) to learn more.

## Health, Mental Health Services Important During California Wildfires

Molly Dalton

In early January, a nightmare began for tens of thousands of people in and around Los Angeles, California, when massive wildfires erupted, changing lives forever. Fed by dry conditions and strong Santa Ana winds, the fires burned for weeks,

destroying or damaging more than 19,000 homes. Today, people who lived and worked in fire-ravaged communities like Altadena and Pacific Palisades are coping with unimaginable destruction and an uncertain future.

The American Red Cross responded immediately, launching what would become a massive relief operation. It took more than 1,400 trained Red Cross disaster workers to support a relief operation of this size. There was an immediate need for health and mental health services which were provided by almost 200 trained volunteers, some who were part of a large effort to recruit and train qualified people from the area.



Red Cross Disaster Health Services volunteer Julie Wood helped at the Pasadena, California, shelter following the wildfires that swept Los Angeles County. Hundreds of people who were evacuated by the disaster, many of whom lost their homes, sought safety in the shelters as they navigated their next steps to recovery. Here, Julie was visiting Kay Bailey, who had been evacuated from her home. Red Cross nurses provide critical basic medical support for those affected by disaster, including initial examinations, and often replace prescriptions and durable medical equipment left behind in the rush to safety. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Several partners who supported the need for health services in our shelters included the International Medical Corps, Medical Reserve Corps and Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

Health Services responders provided assistance with activities of daily living, wound care, monitoring of glucose levels, blood pressure checks, assistance with minor illnesses or injuries. They helped replace lost medications, durable medical equipment, consumable medical supplies, hearing aids, glasses/contacts and dentures.

Mental Health workers provided support for individuals experiencing disaster-related stress, including members of the affected community as well as any Red Cross workers experiencing the stress of disaster response.

All in all, with our partners we opened or supported as many as 25 emergency shelters, providing more than 20,000 overnight stays for

those impacted by the fires.

Working with partners, we also provided almost 175,000 meals and snacks and more than 202,000 relief items, serving more than 22,000 households. Red Cross caseworkers helped almost 30,000 people with recovery support.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** The Red Cross is operating in a state of continuous disaster response, with a major disaster occurring as often as every 15 days. Thus, there is a crucial need for disaster volunteers. Consider putting on a Red Cross vest and joining us. Visit [redcross.org/volunteertoday](https://www.redcross.org/volunteertoday) to learn more and find out about our Nursing and Health activities [here](#).

**OUR WORK CONTINUES** Long after the wildfires, flooding and other disaster threats are over, people still need help. The Red Cross is with them through its Long-Term Recovery programs, which can include direct financial assistance, grants and community recovery support.

For people impacted by the California wildfires, our Long-Term Recovery team is providing additional financial assistance for people impacted by the Palisades and Eaton Fires in California earlier this year. This program was made possible by the generosity of donors from across the country who supported the 2025 California Wildfires disaster relief operation. So far, the Red Cross has committed over \$11M in direct financial assistance.

Our Long-Term team has provided a grant to Radio Bilingüe to support the development and broadcast of Spanish messaging to affected populations. The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank received a grant to build capacity and support for the food bank and its more than 600 partners to distribute both food and non-food items to impacted communities.

211LA is another grant recipient, given to support those displaced by the fires as they navigate housing and other critical resources. The Hope Crisis Response Network received a grant to support smoke and ash remediation and roof repairs in the affected areas.

Our Long-Term Recovery team has also participated in Multi-Agency Resource Centers, where people can

connect with a number of service providers in one location to help in their recovery.

Through the generosity of our donors, we will continue to work with local officials, government

agencies and nonprofit partners in the months ahead to coordinate relief and recovery efforts for these and any future disasters this year, helping survivors get back on their feet and rebuild their lives.

## NHQ Leadership Awards Ceremony Honors Nurses

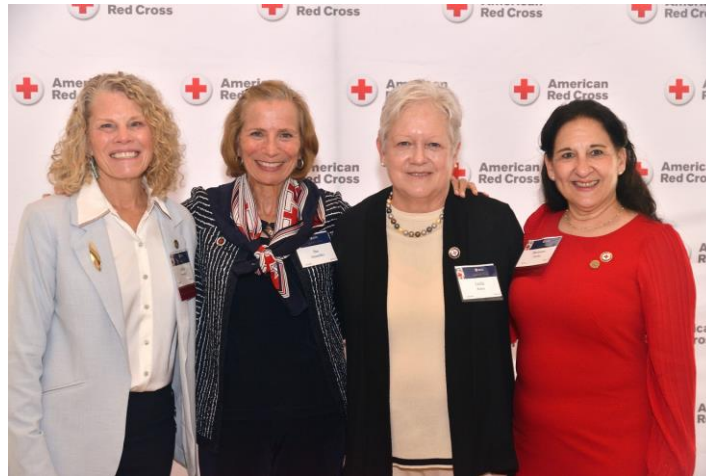
Laurie Willshire, MPH, BSN, RN

Nurses were front and center at the Leadership Awards ceremony held at the American Red Cross National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. in April, being recognized with three separate awards.

**Marianne Hurley, RN, BSN** received the Ann Magnussen Award, which is presented to a volunteer or employee registered nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening or improving American Red Cross programs and services. It is the highest honor of nursing achievement in the American Red Cross. As a Red Cross nurse for more than 20 years, Hurley has provided more than 25,000 volunteer service hours, and deployed as a Disaster Health Services nurse to 37 Disaster Response Operations. In her current role as the Disaster Health Services regional lead for the Texas Gulf Coast Region, she oversees a team of more than 100 tremendously dedicated nurses. Together, they serve a region with one of the highest rates of disasters in the United States.

In addition to her leadership and dedication as a Red Cross nurse, Marianne Hurley is committed to recruiting and training new volunteers in the region. She serves as the Gulf Coast Region's lead for the onboarding process and maintains contact with volunteers as a mentor and a resource. Hurley also serves as the region's staff wellness reviewer, dedicating even more of her time to ensure that the region's caregivers have the support that they need.

**The Pacific Islands Region** received the 2024 Susan Hassmiller Nursing Award, which includes a \$5,000 grant to support a Red Cross proposal that



At the award ceremony, from left to right: Karen Younger, recipient of Bob Hassmiller Excellence in Disaster Services Award; Susan Hassmiller; Linda Fahey, Chief Nurse; and Marianne Hurley, recipient of Ann Magnussen Award. Photo by Dermot Tatlow/American Red Cross

promotes nursing and/or nursing student involvement across Red Cross lines of business, and/or in policy and leadership roles.

The Pacific Islands team recognized the urgent need to significantly increase their Disaster Health Services-trained workforce following the devastating fires in Maui, when there were only 12 health services associates

on the island available to meet the needs of 10,000 people, many with disaster-caused health needs.

Regional Disaster Health Services Advisor Cyndi Davies Wong, MBA, RN and the Pacific Islands Region team took decisive steps to increase the DHS workforce by partnering with the University of Hawai'i-Manoa and, in 2024, integrating Red Cross nursing into the curriculum for nursing students completing their community health coursework. Moving forward, Red Cross nursing will be a permanent part of the university's community health course.

The Susan Hassmiller Nursing Award will support the development of a model for a Red Cross-University of Hawai'i Partnership, with a plan to utilize the model in the four BSN programs in Hawaii. This AS-L program will allow nursing students to engage in a meaningful way with Red Cross, complimenting their community health education. The nursing students will be able to immediately use their Red Cross training to do outreach to educate community members throughout the semester. This engagement plants the seed for future involvement as Disaster Health Services workers with Red Cross in an ancillary expansion capacity while they are students and

after they are licensed. After development and testing of the model, the team's long-term objective is for Red Cross nursing to become a standard part of nursing education in Hawaii, the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and American Samoa.

Through this project, Wong and the Pacific Islands team are taking decisive steps to support the Red Cross in meeting its service ratio standards of one health service associate for every 50 people with disaster-caused health needs. Although Wong and her team were unable to be present for the award presentation, Regional Executive Tony Briggs accepted the award on behalf of the Pacific Islands team.

**Karen Younger, PhD, RN** is the recipient of the 2024 Bob Hassmiller Excellence in Disaster Services Award, which is named in honor of a beloved Red Cross volunteer who left behind a legacy of service to others through his decades of volunteer work. While not specific to nursing, this award recognizes those who carry on Bob Hassmiller's tradition of excellence in service, specifically in the areas of disaster preparedness, response or recovery. This award provides a \$1,000 grant to the volunteer's home chapter to offset the cost of hosting a volunteer recognition event.

Younger is a leader of the Minnesota and Dakotas Region's Volunteer Disaster Health Leadership team. Her first deployment as a disaster health nurse after Hurricane Florence in 2018 led to her continuing work today as a leader of regional, divisional and national Response Management teams, routinely responding to major disaster incidents. She has assumed leadership roles on Disaster Relief Operations in both Disaster Health Services and in Operations Management. She served in key Operations Management leadership roles in response to Hurricane Helene and to the



At the award ceremony, Tony Briggs, regional executive, Pacific Islands Region, with Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN. Photo by Dermot Tatlow/American Red Cross

unprecedented flooding disasters that affected the Minnesota and Dakotas Region in 2024.

Also in 2024, Younger led the effort to develop and implement protocols that would allow Disaster Health Services personnel to respond to disasters across the three states that make up the region. Balancing the Red Cross mission for clients with each state's

individual statutes while focusing on the speed to service that is vital when addressing health care needs, she identified nurses who were licensed in each state and willing to help clients outside their normal service delivery area. She worked to allow easy access for those nurses to the client lists and designed a system for notification to ensure that all clients received needed assistance. After the initial implementation in the Minnesota and Dakotas Region, she facilitated the implementation of this process across the division.

Younger has travelled extensively across the region's vast and remote territory to fulfill service delivery commitments and facilitate partnerships, with special emphasis on engaging leaders to train in tribal communities, contributing greatly to bringing Red Cross resources to those most in need. The tribal communities have a strong interest in being ready to respond independently to disasters when possible. She has helped them prepare through education, sharing information about disaster health services in shelters including assessment and care of clients as well as emergency supplies needed for that care.

These and other national awards are given annually; the nomination period for 2025 awards will open in September and close in October. Additional information can be found on [OneSource](#).

## **Seeking Applicants for the Jane Delano Nursing Student Scholarship**

Are you an American Red Cross volunteer or employee who is a graduate or undergraduate nursing student? Do you know of someone who is?

The Jane Delano Nursing Student Scholarship, which was established to promote nursing as a career and to encourage the involvement of new

nurses in the American Red Cross, is open for applications through May 30, 2025. To be considered for this scholarship, applicants must:

- Have served as an American Red Cross registered volunteer or employee within the past five (5) years.
- Have completed the equivalent of at least one year of college/university credits.

- Be currently enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate in an accredited United States nursing program.

At least one \$3,000 scholarship will be awarded in 2025. Additional information, including application forms, can be found on [OneSource](#). Questions may be directed to [RedCrossNurse@redcross.org](mailto:RedCrossNurse@redcross.org).

## ANA Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation® Blog\*: Disaster Preparedness for Nurses – Part 2 of 3

Posted by Holly E. Carpenter, RN, BSN

*3 reasons to volunteer with the Red Cross Disaster Health Services program and other disaster recovery assistance programs*

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According to U.S. Census Bureau statistics, natural disasters in our country [displaced more than 3 million people](#) between December 2022 and August 2024. As we have witnessed, events like hurricanes, wildfires and floods can (and do) impact communities anywhere, at any time. More than 99% of the country has experienced at least one [federally declared major weather-related disaster](#) since 2011. When these disasters hit, recovery and relief volunteers spring into action.

There are many disaster recovery and relief programs in the United States. Several are profiled on the [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#) website. One of the most revered organizations, the [American Red Cross](#), faithfully delivers on the organization's mission to prevent and alleviate human suffering during an emergency. Volunteers make up 90% of the Red Cross workforce, according to Linda Fahey, DNP, RN, CENP. Linda serves as the interim chief nurse at the Red Cross and personally responds to disasters in her community and across the country.

"We're launching twice as many relief efforts now as we did a decade ago," Linda says. "The number of disasters continues to grow each year. Virtually every nurse has been impacted in some way, whether directly in their own home or at work. Disasters touch us all."



### Disaster Recovery Organizations Need Your Help

Nurses and health care volunteers are a crucial part of the disaster response. As climate events continue to increase, so does the need for trained nurses

in every community. Here are three important reasons to consider joining relief efforts:

#### Reason 1: Many Nurses Aren't Prepared to Respond to Disasters

As frontline care providers, nurses possess the training, experience, and compassion that organizations like the Red Cross need. More than [13,000 nurses and health professionals](#) currently volunteer in some capacity within the Red Cross. More are needed.

While most nurses may want to respond and help during a disaster, many don't know how, Linda says. She notes that a recent report by the [National Academy of Medicine](#) found that nurses in the U.S. are not adequately prepared for public [disaster response](#).

"This report is a call to action for nurses," Linda says. "Climate-related disasters are public health issues. When social inequities limit people's ability to seek health care and access resources during a hurricane or wildfire, nurses can help. And organizations like the Red Cross can teach them how."

## Reason 2: Communities Benefit from Local Disaster Response Nurses

While the Red Cross will deploy volunteer nurses across the country when needed, the fastest response comes from local volunteers. Having trained volunteers in every community is especially helpful in parts of the country that require nurses to be licensed in the state where they respond.

“When a large-scale disaster impacts a state with state-specific license requirements, there can be a shortage of available trained nurses,” says Linda. “The Red Cross has resources to activate and train local nurses quickly after a disaster hits, but ideally, we’d love to have people ready to go. If more nurses proactively volunteer and receive disaster response training before an event, they can jump right in. This enables us to support an affected community much faster.”

She also notes that local nurses know their own community and resources better than volunteers from outside the area. “It’s so much easier to respond in a region you know,” she says. “Your community is better off, and you’re better off. You will make a difference.”

## Reason 3: Nurses Are Naturally Effective Responders

According to Linda, nurses already possess all the key characteristics needed to be effective volunteers during a disaster. These include:

- **Communication skills:** Volunteers need to communicate clearly and effectively in a chaotic environment.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Volunteers will work with clients and team members from different cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles.
- **Empathy:** Disaster response requires understanding the needs and feelings of people going through traumatic experiences.
- **Flexibility and resilience:** Disasters are high-stress environments. They require an ability to adapt to chaotic and rapidly changing situations. Volunteers may take on multiple roles or tasks as needed.
- **Physical stamina:** Disaster response may require long hours and physically demanding tasks.

- **Problem-solving skills:** Disasters bring unexpected challenges. Responders need to think quickly and resourcefully.
- **Teamwork:** Volunteers are placed on teams with diverse backgrounds and experience. Collaboration is key.

## Many Ways to Volunteer

Relief and recovery organizations like the Red Cross offer many [opportunities for nurses to volunteer](#) during and after a disaster:

- **Direct care:** Nurses can work one-on-one with clients, assessing and assisting with their unmet needs. This can include helping them replace medications or medical equipment, providing first aid or CPR, and connecting clients with community resources.
- **Staff health nurse:** In this role, nurse volunteers care for their fellow responders’ health needs.
- **Community preparedness:** Nurses can work to educate, train, and prepare communities for disasters. This includes participating in disaster health planning, drills, and exercises.

## Minimal Time Requirements

Red Cross volunteers are asked to commit just one day a month in many regions, Linda says. A shift may entail simply being on call to assist local clients who request services. Volunteers with more availability may deploy to a large-scale disaster across the country for 10 to 14 days. “It’s really what you are able and willing to do,” she says.

## The Rewards of Service

Linda says that her time with the Red Cross has been some of the most rewarding work she’s done in 50 years as a nurse. “Every nurse I’ve met who has responded to disasters has found the work incredibly fulfilling,” she says. “You get to know and love the people you meet in these situations, and you get to help people when they need it the most.”

*Have you volunteered to help your community during a disaster? Share your experience with us in the [comments](#).*

**ANA Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation® Spotlight\*: Donna Velasquez, PhD, RN****Posted by Holly E. Carpenter, RN, BSN***Retired nurse finds fulfillment and new ways to care for others as an American Red Cross volunteer*\*© American Nurses Association. Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation (hnhn.org). [Reprinted](#) with permission. All rights reserved.

The American Red Cross motto, “Sleeves Up, Hearts Open, All In,” reflects the selfless, tireless, and compassionate work performed by thousands of volunteers every day.

[#Healthynurse](#) Donna Velasquez, PhD, RN, has embodied this philosophy for the past 6 years as a Red Cross volunteer.



Donna Velasquez, PhD, RN

After completing a successful career as a nurse practitioner and the director of the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program at Arizona State University, Donna still had more to give. She knew just where her skills could be of greatest use.

“As a child, I read about Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross,” Donna says. “Her work caring for soldiers on Civil War battlefields was very inspiring. And a friend of mine was a volunteer who deployed to New York City right after 9/11. After hearing about that, I knew the Red Cross was an organization I wanted to join.”

Because she was busy with her job, Donna didn’t pursue volunteering until 2018, after she retired. She was surprised to discover how easy the process was.

“The online sign-up procedure was quick,” she says. “I clicked ‘Apply,’ filled out an application, and they ran a background check. Shortly after that, I started training.”

**Ample Opportunities to Serve People in Need**

Donna learned there are many ways for nurses to use their skills within the Red Cross.

Nurse volunteers care for people in shelters during and after natural disasters. They also help develop [programs on emergency preparedness](#). Nurses can also work in management and leadership roles throughout the organization.

Donna began her volunteer work as part of a

disaster team in her local Arizona and New Mexico region.

“A lot of what we do involves supporting people after a house fire,” she says. “People don’t realize the impact of losing all their medications in a fire in the middle of the night.

We help them contact the pharmacy and get refills. We can talk to insurance companies on their behalf and work out co-pays and authorizations if needed.”

When people lose medical equipment like walkers or glucose monitors, Red Cross nurse volunteers can help get a replacement quickly.

“We focus on empowering people during a disaster,” Donna says. “They’re often in shock and feel uncertain about what to do. We talk them through each step, offer resources, and help them regain their footing.”

**Efficient Large-Scale Disaster Response**

When disasters like hurricanes occur, the Red Cross mobilizes volunteers from all over the country to help.

“The logistics alone are incredible,” Donna says. “It’s so impressive to see how fast the Red Cross can get volunteers to a location. The organization provides them with cars, equipment, computers, and everything else they need to open shelters and care for people. It’s a huge operation. The minute we hit the ground, we have to work quickly and effectively as a team.”

According to Donna, standardized volunteer training is a primary reason the Red Cross is successful in deploying large teams to disaster zones.

“We may be from different regions, but our policies and procedures are the same. We know what to expect and what our roles will be. When we get there, we get it all done. And we have a huge impact in helping many people.”

**Flexibility and Opportunities for Growth**

Although Donna waited until she was retired to begin volunteering, she says nurses can join at any age or point in their career.

“I didn’t realize how flexible working with the Red Cross could be,” Donna says. “Other than the initial training program, there is no required commitment for how much or how often we volunteer. We sign up for shifts that work with our schedule.”

Donna also enjoys growing and learning new skills. “During COVID-19, there was less direct contact with people because of social distancing,” she says. “So, I signed up for additional training on mapping and planning for wildfires.”

The training led Donna to take on a second role in information and planning. When she’s not volunteering as a nurse, she works in the background, helping organize deployed teams. She also acts as an assistant director for some incidents.

According to Donna, volunteering for the [Red Cross](#)

has given her a purpose and the means to continue contributing to society.

“There’s always something new to learn,” she says. “Volunteers can explore different roles and functions. You can travel all over the country or help right at home.”

Most importantly, volunteering has brought Donna back to the original reason she became a nurse. “I get to listen to people’s stories, care for them, and empower them to care for themselves,” she says.

Donna says her only regret is not joining the Red Cross sooner. “I wish I hadn’t waited until I retired, because there’s so much to learn and do,” she says. “Anyone can join whenever they’re ready, and I really encourage them to do so.”

*Donna Velasquez, PhD, RN, is an Arizona and New Mexico regional lead for information and planning and leadership development with the American Red Cross.*

**ANA Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation® Spotlight\*: Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN**

**Posted by Holly E. Carpenter, RN, BSN**

*Nurse views life of service and nursing leadership as a privilege*

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[#healthynurse](#) Susan (Sue) Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN, has an impressive career. She’s been an international adviser on nursing and was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal — the highest nursing honor given by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The American Academy of Nursing recognizes Sue as a Living Legend. She also helped change the direction of nursing as the emeritus directors of the [Future of Nursing](#) reports and the [Campaign for Action](#).



Sue Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN

“I have this need to serve,” Sue says. “And it’s not entirely selfless. It’s addicting to serve others. Truthfully, I get a lot out of it. I meet the most interesting people and learn so much from them. I get to help others, make a difference, and impact the world.”

**Called to Service**

Sue didn’t always throw herself into volunteering and serving others. The turning point occurred when she was 20 years old. Her parents were in Mexico City during a massive earthquake. Without cell phones or the

internet, Sue panicked, not knowing if they were OK. She called the telephone operator for help, who connected her with the American Red Cross. Within an hour, a Red Cross volunteer delivered the news that her parents were safe.

Soon after, Sue walked into the American Red

The list goes on and on, including a number of lifetime achievement awards.

But beneath Sue’s high-level titles and impressive awards lies a simple truth: She loves to be of service to others.

Cross office closest to her college campus at Florida State University and paid that kindness forward. Already an RN, “I jumped in with everything I had,” Sue says. “I explained that because of what the Red Cross did for me, I wanted to do whatever I can for them.”

Sue initially taught first-aid and CPR classes. As an American Red Cross volunteer, she’s done anything and everything, including:

- **Helping military families** through the organization’s mandate to provide emergency communications, such as the death of a loved one, emergency financial assistance, and social service referrals.
- **Working on the front lines** of national disasters, including 9/11.
- **Serving as chair** on several local and state Red Cross boards, as well as the National Board of Governors, where she chaired the 9/11 fund.

“When I’m in the midst of a disaster and in crisis mode,” she says, “I look at all the people there to help, and I feel an incredible calm. I’m struck by how honored and privileged I am to be a volunteer.”

### Recognizing the Role of Nurses in Service



During her nearly 5 decades with the Red Cross, Sue’s career has also been punctuated by her support of nurses and the service they provide. Her role in the *Future of Nursing* reports and *Campaign for Action* changed the face of the nursing profession. But she’s also made it a point to encourage programs and actions that boost nurse engagement and leadership in the Red Cross. She supports and recognizes those endeavors with an annual grant as part of the [American Red Cross Susan Hassmiller Nursing Award](#). She also founded the [Nurses on Boards Coalition](#), an organization that now supports bringing nurses onto Red Cross boards.

“What’s important to me is keeping a steady drumbeat on the role of nursing in the Red Cross,”

Sue says. “The voice of nurses can get lost when there are so many other volunteers. But nurses are critically important to the Red Cross and have been at its core since the organization began. Their work includes the civil war and all wars and disasters since then.”

### Embracing the Challenges of Climate Change

Like all nurses, Sue recognizes the need to adapt to changing circumstances. It is one reason she accepted her newest position co-chairing the advisory committee for one of the American Red Cross’s newest national endeavor: the [Community Adaptation Program \(CAP\)](#).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) collected data showing that the number of natural disasters since 1980 continues to increase and intensify. “These disasters affect those who are least likely to have the resources to bounce back quickly,” Sue says. She notes that the Red Cross’s help after these disasters requires money based entirely on donations. “The financial commitment for the Red Cross is enormous, and we cannot ignore global warming and the effects on our citizens.”

The Red Cross is adapting its disaster response to involve established partnerships with other nonprofit organizations. Together, they prepare communities for disaster and coordinate their responses. They are testing this new method in approximately 20 targeted U.S. communities often hit hard by natural disasters.

Sue says the top concerns are health, hunger and housing. By partnering with people in these communities around those issues, they hope to better prepare, respond and recover from the next disaster.

“We’re realizing that there are a lot of people who want to help, who can help, and this is how we’re going to get it done,” Sue says.

### Lessons From a Life of Service

Looking back at her career, Sue reflects on a few simple principles that helped her get where she is today:

- **Be a generous leader:** “As a leader, give back, share, teach, mentor, and help those you lead. Don’t do it *because* it always comes back to you, though it always does come back to you.”
- **Recognize that service is a privilege:** “What’s important? Giving back. We are so privileged to be on this Earth and given this life. I’m not asking people to give a million dollars, but everybody can do *something* to help during their time on Earth.”
- **Say ‘yes’ more than you say ‘no’:** “In my life, I said ‘yes’ because I’m enthusiastic. I said ‘yes’ because I want to help people. I said ‘yes’ because there are always interesting things to

learn. Just say ‘yes’ more than you say ‘no.’”

“Want the secret to a long life?” Sue says. “Look at my heroes, Clara Barton and Florence Nightingale — the mother of nursing and the mother of the American Red Cross. They both lived to be 90. The secret to a long life is community connectedness, giving back, and knowing you have something to contribute to society.”

*Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN, continues to serve the American Red Cross. As an ICF-certified executive/leadership coach, Sue advises and coaches health care leaders through her consulting company, Sulu Coaching.*

## A Veteran Volunteer Who Supports Her Community Through the Red Cross

Reprinted from [OneSource](#) article posted by the American Red Cross of Puerto Rico

Since joining the organization, she has dedicated her time and effort to supporting U.S. veterans, U.S. service members, and their families. For Dr. Reynoso Acosta, volunteering is a way to extend her commitment to the U.S. military community. “It is a privilege to be healthy and have the opportunity to serve the community,” said the volunteer from Mayagüez.



Dr. Adelina Reynoso Acosta, U.S. Navy veteran and Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces volunteer.

U.S. veterans readjust to community life and reconnect with their families. Dr. Reynoso Acosta knows firsthand what U.S. military personnel experience. During her military career, she had the opportunity to serve in 18 countries and participate in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This professional works at Ft. Buchanan, and her experiences at the Red Cross have shown her

Her volunteer work involves offering workshops for U.S. service members and their immediate families to help them navigate the challenges of deployment. “I love supporting service members and their families through this process,” the volunteer mental health specialist stated.

Dr. Adelina Reynoso Acosta, a U.S. Navy veteran with the rank of Petty Officer Second Class, joined as a volunteer in the American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces in February 2023.

Similarly, through the Red Cross Resilience Workshops, she helps U.S. military personnel and

that “we are more alike than different. We all face challenges, and the tools for success are available; we just need to find them.”

To the people who wish to volunteer but do not know how to start, she encouraged them to do so while they can because “many wish they could volunteer but are unable.” Volunteers like Dr. Reynoso Acosta make up 90% of the humanitarian work in the Red Cross Puerto Rico Region. These individuals contribute to various service lines, including Service to the Armed Forces, Disaster Cycle Services and Biomedical Services, among others. Here is the [original story](#).

## How Blood Donation Led to Support Sickle Cell Warriors

Reprinted from [OneSource](#) article posted by Meghan Rossman-Leblanc, Western New York Region

From a young age, Jasmine Westbrook understood the importance of blood donation.

“The first time I was introduced to donating blood I was in high school. We had a drive, but you know,

when you're in high school, you don't have the best diet – especially breakfast. You're not eating right, so a majority of us, myself included, couldn't donate," she laughed. "I initially donated blood about 10 years ago in college during a drive and I was a little bit more educated on having a balanced meal the night before and before the donation."

She credits her mother, a longtime blood donor herself, for inspiring her to set a routine early on in life.

"We just want to do good," Westbrook explains. "In the last five years, I've started donating regularly once I really understood what my blood donation could do. How it could really impact somebody. I was doing it because I knew it would help people."

But it was after Westbrook attended a panel discussion on sickle cell disease co-hosted by Sickle Cell Warriors of Buffalo, the American Red Cross of Western New York and community partners that she began to look at her role as a blood donor in a new light.

"I attended and I really learned about the CEK-negative component."

There are an estimated 100,000 people suffering from the effects of sickle cell disease in the United States. From pain to organ failure, patients with sickle cell often face serious medical complications due to an inherited gene that creates sickle-shaped red blood cells, causing difficulty in navigating through small blood vessels. As a result, blood transfusions are vital to treatment, with some patients requiring approximately 100 transfusions per year.

Sickle cell patients receiving transfusions rely heavily on donors who carry CEK-negative antigens, which provides the best blood match and helps alleviate symptoms for those fighting sickle cell. Blood donors who are African American are nearly



Westbrook, seen here at the WNY PRIDE Drive in December 2024, now regularly donates Power Reds to help double the impact for sickle cell patients in need.

three times more likely to be CEK-negative than donors of a different race or ethnicity.

To help increase the availability of close-matching blood for sickle cell patients, [the American Red Cross launched the Sickle Cell Initiative in 2021](#). Since the launch, more than 125,000 first-time African American donors have rolled up a sleeve to help strengthen and diversify the blood supply. And as part of that initiative, more than 260,000 sickle cell trait screenings have been provided to donors.

"I left that event and wanted to know if I had that protein, because people talk about blood types, but they don't always talk about that," Westbrook says. "That day, I donated double reds, they tested it, and I got the card was told I was CEK-negative."

Since then, Westbrook's personal and professional motivations to encourage others to roll up a sleeve have taken on new meaning. A health care advocate with the Healthcare Education Project, Westbrook works directly with patients and the public through community events and uses the opportunity to inspire and educate others to donate not only for themselves but patients – especially sickle cell warriors in need.

"I feel like it's my duty because I have a protein in my blood that allows me to really help people and specifically in the African American community. A lot of the work that I do is coming back to my cultural group and knowing that I have the protein in my blood – that will really help people with sickle cell, which is an illness that is high in our community. Of course, I'll share my blood. A big part of my role is advocacy on a statewide level for access to health care. I'm able to share information with people to help keep our community more educated, like with sickle cell. When the conversation comes up now, I'm equipped with information to say, 'Why don't you donate and see if you have that protein?' I'm helping to pass the word around so we can have a healthier community. So, it's personal for me and it's business."

## **American Red Cross Releases Neonatal Advanced Life Support Program, Helping to Address the National Crisis of Maternity Deserts** Marie Manning, APR

American Red Cross Training Services is proud to announce our newest resuscitation education program, Neonatal Advanced Life Support (NALS).

With more than one-third (35.1%) of U.S. counties experiencing maternity care deserts and over half of the counties in the United States without a hospital that provides obstetric care (Stoneburner et al., 2024), expanding neonatal resuscitation education inside and outside of the hospital is more critical than ever. To address this need, the Red Cross collaborated with the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) to develop a new and innovative option for neonatal resuscitation training that addresses the management of newborns both in and out of the traditional delivery room or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

"The American Red Cross is reshaping the neonatal resuscitation market to make education more accessible to all relevant healthcare and emergency medical services personnel – whether they be in hospital birthing centers, emergency departments or settings served by emergency medical services providers," said Dom Tolli, senior vice president of Product Management and Platform Development for the Red Cross. "The Red Cross NALS curriculum is set to transform resuscitation outcomes in critically underserved areas of the country where obstetric hospitals and services are scarce."

AWHONN affirms the need for expanding neonatal resuscitation education both within and beyond hospital settings. "This need has never been more urgent, especially as access to maternity care continues to decline in regions of the United States where it is most needed," said Jonathan Webb, MPH, MBA, chief executive officer of AWHONN. "Currently, nearly 5.3 million women of childbearing age and approximately 350,000 babies are impacted by these gaps in care. The consequences are disproportionately severe for rural communities and people of color, who often face limited or nonexistent access to essential maternity care services."

The NALS program emphasizes evidence-based practices and aligns with the Consensus on Science

with Treatment Recommendations (CoSTR) of the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR) and the American Red Cross Neonatal Advanced Life Support Healthcare Guidelines as developed by the American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council and AWHONN. It is consistent with the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Heart Association. Further, it is the first neonatal resuscitation course to include high reliability principles throughout the course content.

The two NALS Blended Learning courses (Foundations and Comprehensive) combine evidence-based interventions, psychomotor skills and high-reliability principles with critical thinking and problem-solving strategies, equipping healthcare providers with the necessary tools for effective resuscitation of a newborn.

The NALS Foundations course meets the needs of providers who may be present at a birth or involved in the care of a newborn who may require resuscitation while awaiting the arrival of an advanced resuscitation team. The NALS Comprehensive course meets the needs of providers from initial steps through post-resuscitation care.

NALS will be offered as a stand-alone course by the Red Cross and AWHONN. The full Red Cross Resuscitation Suite™ curriculum, consisting of Basic Life Support (BLS), Advanced Life Support (ALS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) and now NALS, is available through the Red Cross or on HealthStream's technology platform – the most widely adopted workforce development platform among the nation's hospitals and health systems.

"The introduction of NALS marks a significant and innovative advancement to the American Red Cross Resuscitation Suite program," said Luther Cale, vice president of Clinical Programs for HealthStream. "Enhancing neonatal resuscitation education both within and beyond hospital walls is crucial. This collaboration provides an innovative approach to support healthcare professionals in improving resuscitation outcomes."

Additional program details about NALS and all

Resuscitation Suite programs are available at [redcross.org/resuscitation](https://redcross.org/resuscitation).

**Reference:** Stoneburner, A., Lucas, R., Fontenot, J., Brigrance, C., Jones, E., & DeMaria, A.L. (2024). *Nowhere to go: Maternity care deserts across the US*. (Report No 4). March of Dimes. [https://www.marchofdimes.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/2024\\_MoD\\_MCD\\_Report.pdf](https://www.marchofdimes.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/2024_MoD_MCD_Report.pdf)

## More Ways to Get Involved

Jennifer Warga

### The Red Cross Community Says “Thank You, Nurses”

Whether you’re providing emergency care in the wake of a disaster, helping service members, working at blood drives, or leading community education, **nurses bring the mission of the American Red Cross to life**. Since our founder Clara Barton brought comfort to injured Civil War soldiers over 140 years ago, nurses have played a vital role in every element of our work. Today, more than 15,000 nurses are a part of our team.

That’s why we’ve put together a special card for National Nurses Week, and invited our financial and blood donors, volunteers and course takers to fill it with 5,000 signatures. And you’re invited to sign the card in honor of your fellow nurses as well! **It will only take a moment, and can mean so much to those who do so much**. Visit [redcross.org/NMcard](https://redcross.org/NMcard) to get involved.

### Become a Red Cross Champion Today with a Monthly Gift

What does it mean to be an American Red Cross Champion? It means you believe that *every* person impacted by a disaster deserves a helping hand. It means *you’re committed to changing lives every month* of the year. And it means that, whenever or wherever families need us, *you’ll help us answer their call*.

Every day, we depend on our Red Cross Champions’ monthly donations to keep our shelves stocked and our teams ready to leap into action. **And as a thank you to those who sign up, we’ll send you an exclusive Red Cross tote bag free of charge**. Visit [redcross.org/NMmonthly](https://redcross.org/NMmonthly) to make your gift.

### Make a Splash for a Great Cause!

Dive into action this June with the 15 Mile Swim Challenge hosted by the American Red Cross. Money raised by Swim Challenge participants helps us provide swim lessons that help reduce drownings and build confidence in the water.

Start a fundraiser on Facebook or Instagram and ask friends, family and colleagues to support you. Then start swimming! **You’ll earn an exclusive Red Cross towel after you receive your first donation!** Visit [redcross.org/NMswim](https://redcross.org/NMswim) to register. (If you miss our June 2025 challenge, visit [redcross.org/NMswim](https://redcross.org/NMswim) to learn about our next challenge and fundraising thank you gift.)

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](mailto: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!**