



**American  
Red Cross**

# Nursing Matters Past and Present

American Red Cross National Nursing Committee

62nd Edition  
Spring 2026

## Honoring Our Legacy, Celebrating Our Impact: Nurses Week 2026

To our Red Cross nurses, As we celebrate Nurses Week alongside our colleagues, I want to bring our achievements into focus for you, highlighting the generations of nurses whose work made our efforts possible. While National Nurses Day has only been officially recognized since 1982, when President Ronald Reagan designated May 6<sup>th</sup> as National Nurses Day, the American Red Cross nursing legacy stretches much farther back.

Many of us know that Clara Barton served as a volunteer nurse during the Civil War before founding the American Red Cross. Fewer may know that, beginning in 1887, she led teams of volunteers who operated field hospitals during annual U.S. Army maneuvers in Washington, D.C. In the organization's early years, Red Cross nurses worked tirelessly to combat yellow fever in Jacksonville, Florida. In 1889, they responded to the devastating Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood, which killed more than 2,000 people and left 25,000 homeless.

In 1898, Red Cross nurses provided their first wartime assistance to the U.S. military, recruiting more than 700 nurses during the Spanish-American War. During World War I, over 23,000 Red Cross nurses served both at home by caring for patients during the Spanish flu epidemic and overseas in military settings. That number grew significantly during World War II, when 153,000 nurses held active status with the American Red Cross, including 71,000 who served in the military. In 1941, the Red Cross launched its blood supply program for the armed services; by 1944, more than 1,000 nurses were serving in Red Cross blood centers nationwide.

Following World War II, the federal government established the permanent Army and Navy Nurse Corps, ending the Red Cross's role in recruiting

nurses for military service. As public health programs expanded nationwide, our nursing work evolved as well, but our impact did not end. Instead, Red Cross nurses shifted to new ways of advancing health, safety and resilience in communities we serve.

Today, Red Cross nurses continue to provide disaster health services to individuals and communities affected by floods, fires, hurricanes and mass casualty events. More than 180 employed nurses deliver direct clinical care within Therapeutic and Cellular Services, while volunteers and employed nurses alike serve in military treatment facilities, lead programs and operations across the enterprise, educate the next generation of responders, and strengthen preparedness in communities nationwide. Whether you serve in person or virtually, at the bedside or in the boardroom, in a shelter, a clinic, a blood center, or an Emergency Operations Center, you are part of a living legacy.

Every day over the past year, you have made a tangible difference while providing care under some of the most challenging circumstances—from the Texas floods and widespread fires across the West to a typhoon in Alaska, and, as we go to press, a typhoon in the remote Northern Mariana Islands and Guam. In each of these responses, you have brought clinical expertise, calm in crisis, and compassionate presence to people experiencing some of the hardest days of their lives.

As we celebrate Nurses Week, it is important to remember that while nurses are often on the front lines with our clients and families, we never work alone. Our interprofessional teams—including physicians, EMS professionals, social workers, psychologists, mental health counselors, and many other health professionals—are critical partners and colleagues in this mission. Since our last

Nurses Week celebration in May 2025, our Disaster Health Services team has contributed more than 156,000 volunteer hours. Physicians, social workers, and mental health professionals were recognized during March and April, and Emergency Medical Services Week will be celebrated May 17–23.

I also want to acknowledge the personal resilience it takes to do this work—bearing witness to loss, navigating complex decisions, and returning again and again to serve. As Chief Nurse of the American

Red Cross, along with Associate Chief Nurse, Shawna Sisler, and our entire organization, I want you to know how deeply your unwavering service and dedication to our mission are appreciated. I am honored to do this important work alongside you and look forward to all that we will continue to accomplish together in the years ahead.

Happy Nurses Week!  
Linda Fahey, Chief Nurse  
Shawna Sisler, Associate Chief Nurse  
American Red Cross

## Nursing Leadership Awards Presented at NHQ Ceremony

Laurie Willshire, MPH, BSN, RN

Two American Red Cross nursing leadership awards were presented at the Red Cross National Awards ceremony held April 15 at national headquarters in Washington, DC.

**Ann Smith, Ph.D., CPNP-PC, CNE, RN** received the Ann Magnussen Award, the highest honor of nursing achievement in the American Red Cross. This award is presented annually to a volunteer or employee registered nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening or improving American Red Cross programs and services.



Linda Fahey, Chief Nurse, with Ann Magnussen recipient Ann Smith. Photo by Margot Schulman/American Red Cross.

Dr. Smith began her Red Cross involvement 58 years ago as a swimming instructor and has continued to volunteer, even after starting her career as a nurse and joining the military. A retired Air Force colonel and a current clinical instructor at two universities, she volunteers with the Dallas-Fort Worth Metro West Chapter as well as the

North Texas Region.

In addition to serving as the Disaster Health Services (DHS) lead for her chapter, where she mentors and supports new DHS workers, Smith is also the volunteer coordinator for Academic Service-Learning in her region. In that role, she leads a team that trains faculty and senior nursing students in various aspects of disaster management and response. Recognizing that nursing students needed more training in this area, she participated in designing and developing a curriculum that is now offered at several universities.

She has deployed as a nurse on multiple disaster relief operations, often in a supervisory role. As a certified pediatric nurse practitioner, she has been able to provide training and guidance to nurses and other shelter workers on pediatric requirements. Her nursing background combined with her disaster operational expertise has also made her a much-desired instructor for the North Texas Region.

### The American Red Cross Community Adaptation Program team of Warren County, Kentucky, is the recipient of the 2025 Susan Hassmiller Nursing Award, which includes a \$5,000 grant in support of a Red Cross proposal promoting nurse and nursing student involvement across Red Cross lines of business, and/or in policy and leadership roles.

The Community Adaptation Program (CAP) team partnered with the South Central Kentucky

The Community Adaptation Program (CAP) team partnered with the South Central Kentucky



Susan Hassmiller congratulates Mary Rose Bauer, co-author of Susan Hassmiller Nursing Award application. Photo by Margot Schulman/American Red Cross.

Chapter to submit the proposal for the establishment of a Community Health Navigator Program, “an innovative initiative that will engage nursing students and registered nurses in addressing healthcare disparities among Bowling Green/Warren County’s unhoused and economically disadvantaged populations.”

The Community Health Navigator Program will create partnerships between nurses, nursing students, and vulnerable community members with the goals of improving health outcomes and developing a new generation of community-involved nurses. This program will also support important community initiatives such as CAP partner HOTEL INC’s medical respite and street

## Applications Sought for Jane Delano Nursing Student Scholarship

Laurie Willshire, MPH, BSN, RN

The application window for the Jane Delano Nursing Student Scholarship will remain open until May 29, 2026. The scholarship was established to promote nursing as a career and to encourage the involvement of new nurses in the American Red Cross. To be considered for this scholarship, applicants must:

- Have served as an American Red Cross registered volunteer or employee within the past five years.
- Have completed the equivalent of at least one

## Strengthening a Shared Mission: Renewing Our Partnership with the National Black Nurses Association

Linda L. Fahey, DNP, RN, CENP

We are excited to announce the recent renewal of the American Red Cross’ Memorandum of Understanding with the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA). A valued One Red Cross

medicine programs.

Registered nurses and nursing students will receive training in health care navigation, community mobilization and health literacy promotion, which will enable them to function as health navigators within both clinical and community settings. They will also receive necessary training to become Red Cross volunteers, which will make them eligible to be deployed. This expanded training will benefit the community as well as the Red Cross.

The CAP team will share the details of this Community Health Navigator Program with other CAP teams, RVSOs and Nursing leads across the country in order to facilitate replication in other areas.

The application was submitted by Mary Rose Bauer, RN, MSN, CEN, Central Atlantic Disaster Health Services Advisor, and Patricia Horvath, RN, MSN, Central Atlantic Division Nurse Leader; it was endorsed by the CAP risk reduction manager and chapter executive.

These and other national awards are given annually; the nomination period typically opens in September and closes in October. Additional information can be found on [OneSource](#).

year of college/university credits.

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

At least one \$3,000 scholarship will be awarded in 2026. Additional information, including application forms and submission directions, can be found on [OneSource](#). Questions may be directed to [RedCrossNurse@redcross.org](mailto:RedCrossNurse@redcross.org).

partner since 2011, NBNA members and chapters have supported our shared mission for even longer.

With active leadership support from their Red

Cross National Nursing Committee nursing liaison and Florence Nightingale Medal recipient, Dr. Rebecca Harris-Smith, NBNA members have been instrumental in supporting blood drives in their communities. Chapters have also stepped in to strengthen disaster readiness in high-risk areas and to educate communities about the Measles and Rubella Partnership.

Each year, the NBNA dedicates time at its national conference for American Red Cross volunteer leaders who are also NBNA members to present continuing education topics related to Red Cross programs. This commitment further strengthens and sustains our ongoing partnership.

*The NBNA was organized in 1971 under the leadership of Dr. Lauranne Sams, former Dean and Professor of Nursing at the School of Nursing, Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama. NBNA is a non-profit organization incorporated on September 2, 1972, in the state of*

*Ohio. Today, NBNA represents more than 308,000 African American registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, nursing students, and retired nurses across the United States, the Eastern Caribbean, and Africa, with more than 100 chartered chapters in 33 states.*

*Since its inception, improving the health of African Americans through culturally competent, community-based health programs has been the cornerstone of NBNA's work. The organization's Collaborative Community Health Model—developed by past presidents Dr. Linda Burnes Bolton and Dr. C. Alicia Georges—guides the collaborative partnerships and health initiatives that define NBNA's impact. (Source: [About Us - National Black Nurses Association](#))*

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the National Black Nurses Association for their continued commitment, leadership and support of our partnership and our shared mission.

## **The Movement Turns Ten. Black Mothers Are Still Fighting. Blood Donors Can Help.**

**Tiffany Taylor**

Dr. Monique Rainford cared for her for years. She was young, full of promise and living with sickle cell disease (SC), a less severe form of the illness most consider manageable. One day, she walked into Dr. Rainford's obstetrics office with news that changed everything: she was going to be a mother.

She also knew what that meant. To give herself and her baby the best chance, she would need to transfer her care to a university hospital with a maternal-fetal medicine specialist. It was a careful, informed decision, the kind Black women with high-risk pregnancies often have to make while navigating healthcare systems that require them to advocate for themselves.

Dr. Rainford knew the specialist well. She knew her patient was in capable hands. Months later, her colleague called back with devastating news. The baby arrived healthy. But within days of delivery, the mother developed pneumonia and did not survive.

"I will always remember her telling me she was pregnant and her decision to transfer," says Dr. Rainford, an OB-GYN, assistant professor at Yale

School of Medicine and author of "Pregnant While Black: Advancing Justice for Maternal Health in America". "I never saw her alive again."



Dr. Monique Rainford, OB-GYN and author of "Pregnant While Black: Advancing Justice for Maternal Health in America," believes the maternal mortality crisis facing Black and Hispanic women is preventable, and that real progress demands systemic change.

That loss and the journey of a close friend who also lived with sickle cell disease were the inspiration for a chapter in Dr. Rainford's book, and their memory remains ever present in her mind as she continues her decades long journey in fighting to change outcomes for mothers.

"My overall goal is to make things better for women during their perinatal journey, especially Black

women who have been failed by the system for far too long," says Dr. Rainford. "[They deserve] safer, healthier pregnancies, healthier babies, and better experiences."

### **What the Numbers Reveal and What They Don't**

This April marks National Minority Health Month and the 10th anniversary of Black Maternal Health Week, a milestone that reflects how far the movement has come and how far the U.S. still has to go.

The numbers are sobering, and according to recent data, they are getting worse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported maternal mortality rates have increased for women who are Black (up 8%) and women who are Hispanic (up nearly 9%) compared to pre-pandemic levels, even as rates for women who are white and Asian declined by approximately 7%. Women who are Black remain more than three times as likely to die from pregnancy-related complications as women of other racial and ethnic groups.

"It clearly shows the system is still broken and that the current system is not working for all women — as it never has," says Dr. Rainford.

But the data only tells part of the story. Dr. Rainford, who grew up in Jamaica, brings a perspective that makes the disparity impossible to explain away. African American women have significantly worse outcomes than African-born or Caribbean-born women of shared African ancestry. The difference is not genetics. It is social determinants of health, the lived experience of being Black in America and the cumulative toll that bias, dismissal and systemic inequity can have on a woman's body that is already doing the extraordinary work of growing life.

"This may look like having a provider who, even if they are well-meaning, is prematurely assuming that the symptoms the patient is feeling are normal and not doing the proper evaluation," she says. "This can lead to deadly consequences."

### **When a Mother's Life Depends on Blood**

Among the most urgent of those consequences is

postpartum hemorrhage, severe bleeding after childbirth. It affects 1 in 20 women and is responsible for over 25% of all maternal deaths globally. It can escalate without warning. When it does, blood transfusions can mean the difference between a mother going home to her family and a family going home without her.

For Black women living with sickle cell disease or carrying sickle cell trait, the stakes climb even higher. Research links sickle cell disease to elevated rates of severe maternal morbidity, including higher rates of stillbirth, infection and hemorrhage. When a mother is already facing a high-risk pregnancy and the system around her is slow to listen, there is very little room for missed signs or delayed care.

"The responsibility should not fall solely on providers who are only individuals themselves," Dr. Rainford says, "but on the bigger systems so that more is in place to support the patients and the providers who care for them."

Blood donors and the mission of the American Red Cross play a critical role in that bigger system. A single hemorrhage event can require dozens of units of blood. In an emergency, hospitals depend on type O blood, which can be given to almost any patient. Notably, 57% of Hispanics and 51% of African Americans have type O blood — making these communities especially critical to ensuring lifesaving blood is available when mothers need it most.



Hispanic donors, 57% of whom have type O blood, are among the most vital contributors to ensuring lifesaving blood is available for mothers in crisis. Nursing student Elenise Torres after donating blood at the National Association of Hispanic Nurses 50th Annual Conference Blood Drive.

## A Call to Stand with Mothers



The simplest act of solidarity for mothers in crisis may be the most lifesaving: giving blood. African American donors, 51% of whom have type O blood, play an essential role. Chantal Sullivan (left) and Robyn Mondy donated blood at a Red Cross Blood Donation Center in Oakland, Calif.

Mothers are resilient, powerful and deserving of a healthcare system that honors their humanity. While resilience and dignity do not ensure survival, real progress

demands systemic change.

"Progress would look like maternal mortality decreasing in this country for women regardless of race and ethnicity and the disparity gap narrowing," Dr. Rainford says. "Pregnancy is a vulnerable time. I don't think all the advocacy work should fall on the pregnant woman herself. As a community, we should support them."

Her guidance to Black women is equally direct: find a supportive practice before becoming pregnant, bring someone trusted to appointments, ask questions, stay informed about your medical care and release the weight of carrying it alone.

This April, Black Maternal Health Week marked a decade of advocacy. The Red Cross honors the mothers, clinicians and advocates still fighting, and reminds eligible donors that the simplest act of solidarity for mothers in crisis may be the most lifesaving: giving blood.

## Women Leading with Heart and Humanity: Join the National Virtual Blood Drive

Sara Horein

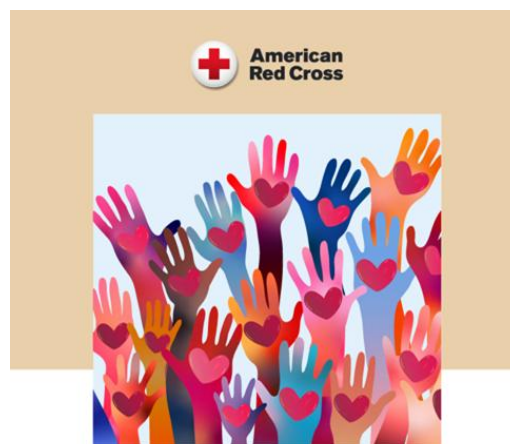
This spring, the American Red Cross is calling on the strength, compassion and leadership of women across the country—and our nursing community is at the heart of that call.

From **May 4 through June 12**, the Red Cross will host the **Women Leading Through Heart and Humanity National Virtual Blood Drive**, a nationwide effort powered by women who want to make a lifesaving impact.

As nurses—both staff and volunteers—you already play a vital role in advancing our mission. This virtual drive offers another meaningful way to support patients who rely on blood every day.

### Why Your Participation Matters

Summer is traditionally one of the most challenging



**Women in  
Philanthropy**  
**Inaugural Virtual Blood Drive**  
May–June 2026

times to maintain a stable blood supply. School breaks, holidays and travel often reduce donor turnout, even though the need for blood remains constant. By donating—or by encouraging someone else to donate—you help ensure that lifesaving blood is available when patients need it most.

With Mother's Day approaching, this effort also offers a heartfelt way to honor the women who inspire you. Whether you give blood, invite a friend, or help spread the word, your involvement is a

powerful expression of gratitude and compassion.

### How to Take Part

All participation in this virtual drive is tracked through a dedicated [BloodLink](#). To join:

- Scan the QR code or [click the link](#)

- Submit your interest in donating
- Enter your ZIP code to find nearby blood drives
- Schedule an appointment—or encourage someone else to do so



This virtual format allows anyone, anywhere in the country, to participate—making it easier than ever to support patients nationwide.

### If You Can't Donate Blood

Even if you're unable to give blood or live outside a Red Cross Blood Region, your voice still makes a tremendous difference. You can:

- Personally invite friends, family or colleagues to donate
- Reshare Red Cross posts to help amplify the message
- Learn more about how women power the Red Cross mission at [redcross.org/womenimpact](https://www.redcross.org/womenimpact)

Advocacy matters. When someone hears about blood donation from a trusted friend, they are far

more likely to take action—especially first-time donors.

### Honoring the Legacy of Women in Philanthropy

The Red Cross has a long and proud history of women driving meaningful change. One shining example is the [Tiffany Circle](#), an influential group of philanthropic women leaders who have collectively raised more than **\$250 million** for the Red Cross since 2007. Today, with more than **1,450 members**, the Tiffany Circle stands as the most successful individual annual fundraising initiative in Red Cross history.

Their commitment reflects the extraordinary impact women have when they unite around compassion, service and community—values that our nursing workforce embodies every day.

Your dedication strengthens the Red Cross mission in countless ways. Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a lifesaving difference—whether by donating blood or by inspiring others to step forward. Your leadership truly helps power our work.

## Red Cross Blood Donations Help Bridge Health Gaps for Diverse Communities

Ana Maria Malaga

National Minority Health Month was observed in April, a time to recognize the health disparities that affect diverse communities across the country, including conditions that impact women and have historically been understudied.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH):

- Female specific conditions such as painful periods, fibroids (non-cancerous uterine growths), and endometriosis, remain poorly understood and under treated, despite their high prevalence.
- More than 80% of pregnancy related deaths in the U.S. are preventable, yet Black women are over three times more likely to die from pregnancy related complications than women from other racial and ethnic groups.
- Women are less likely than men to receive pain medication in emergency departments and wait an average of 30 minutes longer for care,

even when reporting the same pain.

**MONIQUE'S STORY** The story of Monique Gamboa—a wife and mother of two from Chicago — shows how these inequities can allow common symptoms to escalate into life-threatening medical emergencies.

For months, Monique experienced extremely heavy and painful periods that left her weak and exhausted. Despite multiple visits to the doctor, she struggled to get clear answers as her condition worsened. Eventually, an ultrasound revealed the cause, more than six benign uterine tumors — some as large as her fist — and dangerously low hemoglobin levels.

Her doctor recommended immediate surgery, but Monique was too weak to proceed. Instead, she needed two units of blood each week for several weeks to stabilize her condition.

“On the day of my surgery, I lost so much blood that I needed another transfusion,” Monique recalls. “The people who donated blood have no



Monique Gamboa recovering from her surgery in February 2025.

idea how much they helped me. I’m here because of their generosity — they saved my life. Because of them and the support of the Red Cross, I was able to go back home to my children, my husband, and my family.”

Although 70% to 80% of women in the United States will develop fibroids by age 50, the condition has long been a low priority in medical research. The NIH has acknowledged this gap and is currently conducting an analysis — the *Assessment of NIH Research on Women’s Health* — to bring greater attention to understudied conditions such as fibroids and endometriosis.

The lack of research, combined with the normalization of women’s pain, has caused

## Generations of Service to People in Need

Since the American Red Cross was founded in 1881, generations of our volunteers have helped and supported people in need. The true heart of the Red Cross, our volunteers make our humanitarian mission possible every day.

Presently there are more than 325,000 Red Cross volunteers, their diversity reflecting the communities served. Representing age groups from Gen Z to the Silent Generation — from youth leaders to seasoned professionals — Red Cross volunteers bring a wide array of cultures, ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, lifestyles and beliefs to our workforce.

conditions like fibroids to be underestimated— often delaying diagnosis and leading to serious complications.

In this context, Dr. Maribel García Colón, Medical Director for the Red Cross in Puerto Rico, notes that the risk of severe blood loss is frequently overlooked when symptoms are considered “routine.”

“Sometimes we stereotype who might need a blood transfusion and think of patients in need of chronic illnesses like cancer or traumatic accidents,” Dr. García Colón explains. “We don’t always recognize that something as common as fibroids or heavy periods can lead to severe bleeding. Everyday conditions can become serious medical situations where donated blood is essential to treatment — and can mean the difference between life and death.”

After making a full recovery, Monique knew she wanted to give back. Last September, she donated blood for the first time.

“That day was incredibly emotional,” she says. “It really stayed with me. Now, I want to donate every 56 days because I want to give someone else the same chance I was given.”

Join our mission to reduce health disparities and save lives by scheduling a blood donation appointment at [RedCross.org](https://www.redcross.org).

**Molly Dalton**

GenZers — those born between 1997 and 2012 — make up the fastest growing group of our volunteers — 42% — driven largely by growth in student-led Red Cross clubs. Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 make up about a quarter of our volunteers, followed by Baby Boomers (18%) and GenXers (9%). The Silent Generation — people born between 1928 and 1945 — represents the lowest share of volunteers (7%) but contributes a legacy of service that often spans multiple decades.

The Red Cross has many opportunities for volunteers of all ages. No matter what volunteer role is chosen, the impact is profound. They all share a purpose — to provide comfort to someone in

need.

**ALL IN THE FAMILY** For some, volunteering with the Red Cross is a family tradition spanning multiple generations.

**Joan Margolius** is a volunteer blood donor ambassador at the American Red Cross Kearny Mesa Blood Donation Center in California. Her



Three generations of her family volunteered with the American Red Cross, a fact that makes Joan Margolius proud. She serves as a volunteer blood donor ambassador at the American Red Cross Kearny Mesa Blood Donation Center in California.

Donation Center in New York, serving blood donors in the canteen. She volunteered for more than 25 years.

As early as age six, Joan helped her grandmother at the Red Cross. In high school she helped at the Rochester Blood Donation Center and supported a Red Cross telethon in college. Years later, Joan began donating blood. After retiring from her career in human resources, Joan returned to the Red Cross and her current role as a volunteer blood donor ambassador.

“Work with the Red Cross is just part of life,” said Joan reflecting on her family’s involvement in the Red Cross. “The Red Cross gets my blood, my sweat for volunteering, and my tears in monetary donations.”

**Susan and Holly Baker** also come from a family where service with the Red Cross is a tradition. The mother and daughter have dedicated countless hours to supporting disaster relief efforts through the Los Angeles Red Cross Region, each making a

dedication to support the Red Cross mission is inspired by two generations of remarkable women. Her mother, Florence Sayles Margolius, began her Red Cross relationship during WWII, working as a hospital aide supporting military members in the South Pacific. Her grandmother, Ray Kauffman Sayles, started volunteering in the 1950s at the Rochester Red Cross Blood

unique impact in their respective roles.

Susan’s relationship with the Red Cross took off in 2021 when she took over the Mary E. Bazar-Robin Foundation, a charitable organization started by her aunt, for whom the group is named. Susan now serves on the board of the Los Angeles Red Cross Region and is a member of Tiffany Circle. Holly joined the Red Cross in 2024 as an AmeriCorps service member. Within two weeks of starting, she was deployed to Florida as part of the disaster response to Hurricane Helene. Since then, she has served as a Disaster Action Team member, a Community Preparedness Education Team member and as a Regional Volunteer Supervisor.



Susan and Holly Baker come from a family where service with the Red Cross is a tradition. The mother and daughter have dedicated countless hours to supporting disaster relief efforts through the Los Angeles Red Cross Region.

**SERVING A SPECIAL COMMUNITY** Speaking of the many different roles available to Red Cross volunteers, some expand our ability to help by serving Spanish-speaking members in their communities.

In New York, **Martin Hurtado Saenz** and **Yudelka Cuello** provide special care to Spanish-



In New York, Martin Hurtado Saenz provide special care to Spanish-speaking communities served by the American Red Cross Greater New York Region. Photo by Marko Kocic, American Red Cross.



Yudelka Cuello supports Spanish-speaking communities served by the American Red Cross Greater New York Region, responding to emergencies such as home fires. Photo by Marko Kocic, American Red Cross.

speaking communities served by the American Red Cross Greater New York Region. Both respond to emergencies such as home fires, providing comfort and care to Spanish-speaking clients.

In Puerto Rico, **Carmen Hernández** and **Hernan Hernandez** volunteer with the



In Puerto Rico, Carmen Hernández helps military families as a volunteer Hero Care caseworker. Photo by Scott Dalton, American Red Cross.



Hernan Hernandez volunteers in Puerto Rico. He works in logistics, making sure relief supplies reach people in need after disasters. Photo by Scott Dalton, American Red Cross.

American Red Cross Puerto Rico Chapter. Carmen helps Spanish-speaking families notify military members of emergencies and facilitates their

## Home Fire Campaign Helps Save 2,600+ Lives

Molly Dalton

In October of 2014, the American Red Cross joined with community partners across the country to launch its groundbreaking Home Fire Campaign with the goal of preventing deaths and injuries from home fires.

As of the end of March 2026, the Home Fire Campaign is responsible for saving 2,642 lives. The campaign is also credited with installing as many as 2.5 million smoke alarms and making more than a million homes safer.

In addition to installing free smoke alarms in homes in high-risk neighborhoods that don't have them, the campaign also includes educating households about home fire safety and helping them write up their home fire escape plan.

Studies show that you may have as little as two

return home through the Red Cross Hero Care Network. Hernan deploys to disasters, working in logistics, making sure relief supplies reach people in need. He reports a need for volunteers who speak Spanish to help ensure Latinos get the help they need.

**YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES** There are also many [opportunities for young people](#) to support the Red Cross. Today thousands of civic-minded youth help us fulfill our humanitarian mission through community groups or Red Cross School Clubs. From young professionals to college students, high school, middle school and elementary school students, they make a difference every day

**JOIN US** Susan and Holly Baker described it best how every Red Cross volunteer makes their own unique contribution to the mission. "With the Red Cross, no matter what it is that you're doing — if you're donating, volunteering, whatever it is that you're doing — it just makes you feel amazing inside." Holly says, "There really is a job for everyone, no matter what you want to do."

Every contribution matters — visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) to get involved by volunteering, making a financial donation, giving blood or taking a class in lifesaving skills.

minutes to escape a fire, making these steps of the campaign critical. Helping households develop their escape plan is as important as installing smoke alarms.

If you would like to be part of this lifesaving effort, there are opportunities available which don't require prior experience and for which training will be provided. Join the team and help educate families and children about fire safety. Meet with families to help them write their emergency plan or check out opportunities to get our youth prepared through fire safety presentations. [Contact your local chapter](#) to ask about programs in your area.

**ACCESSIBILITY IMPORTANT** Keeta J. Bell, Regional Communications Manager, Georgia Red Cross Region, reports below on the importance of accessible fire safety technology and how a different

kind of alarm is making a difference in Georgia.

The most dangerous disaster in America often doesn't come with a storm front or a headline. It starts at home – many times in the middle of the night. The Red Cross responds to more than 60,000 disasters every year, the majority of which are home fires. Some involve people who may not hear a traditional smoke alarm until it's too late.

For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, seconds lost to delayed notification can mean the difference between life and death. That's why accessible fire-safety technology, such as bed shaker smoke alarms, has become an essential tool for equitable home protection.

### WHAT IS A BED SHAKER SMOKE ALARM?

This smoke alarm is a specialized device designed to alert people who can't rely on sound alone. When a connected smoke alarm detects smoke, the system can activate:

- A vibrating pad placed under a mattress or pillow
- A bright strobe light
- An optional audible alert for those with partial hearing



College Park, Georgia Fire Department members install a bed shaker smoke alarm.

smoke alarm, ensuring no one sleeps through a life-threatening emergency.

Across Georgia, accessible alarms are giving families peace of mind – and, in many cases,

restoring a sense of safety they thought they had lost.



Homeowner Ethel Tyson reading the lips of Red Cross Community Disaster Program Manager Mikkita Dean as they implement a home fire escape plan.

Such was the case for Ethel Tyson, a Georgia resident who is hard of hearing and needed a bed shaker smoke alarm installed. When she contacted the Red Cross, Community Disaster Program Manager Mikkita Dean immediately reached out to the College Park Fire Department for support. Their team was eager to assist with installing the bed shaker alarm and strobe lights.

“We don't install a lot of bed shakers, but they are incredibly valuable in fire safety,” said Sergeant John Grier from the College Park Fire Department. “Fire safety isn't one size fits all. Installing a bed shaker ensures that everyone, especially those who are hard of hearing, has an equal chance to be alerted and escape safely.”

Tyson has lived in her home for more than two decades and only had a traditional smoke alarm installed. During the bed shaker installation, Dean communicated with her through writing and drawing. Together, they developed a home fire escape plan, including identifying a safe meeting spot across the street near a tree where Tyson would wait for firefighters to arrive.

“Ms. Tyson told me she does not use sign language and instead reads lips, which encouraged me to slow my rate of speech and be more intentional in how I communicated,” Dean said. “It was my pleasure to ensure she felt supported, understood and protected in her home.”

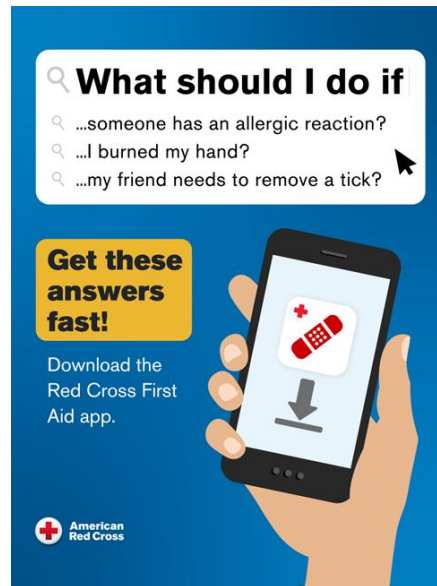
## Refreshed First Aid App Vital Outdoor Tool

Molly Dalton

Wherever you encounter an emergency, having the free American Red Cross First Aid App at your fingertips is essential.

As we head into warmer weather, more people than ever are venturing outside to answer the call of the great outdoors. The National Park Service recorded more than 323 million visits last year, including over 13 million overnight stays.

From weekend campers to seasoned hikers, it's clear record numbers of folks are heading outdoors. However, weather can shift suddenly, trails can take an unexpected turn, and even simple activities — chopping wood, cooking over a fire, or exploring rocky terrain — can lead to moments where quick action matters.



That's why the Red Cross First Aid App is a vital piece of outdoor adventure gear for anyone spending time off the grid or away from familiar surroundings.

The Red Cross First Aid App allows users to quickly locate the nearest hospital if someone becomes injured or ill—providing critical information when every second counts. It also features updated, science-based first aid guidance, giving outdoor adventurers access to the most current safety information right at their

fingertips. From treating bug bites and burns to responding to more serious injuries, the app helps users take action with confidence.

Download the American Red Cross First Aid App by searching for 'American Red Cross' in your app store or at [redcross.org/apps](https://redcross.org/apps).

## How Dr. Felix Amate Brings Life-Saving Vaccines to Chad's Most Remote Regions

Cari Dighton

In the remote regions of Chad, where infrastructure is limited and security concerns are prevalent, Dr. Felix Amate is dedicated to ensuring that the most vulnerable children are not overlooked. As a consultant for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), he supports the Measles & Rubella Country Platform. Dr. Amate navigates some of the world's most challenging environments with a singular focus on equity.



Dr. Felix Amate, consultant for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), supports the Measles & Rubella vaccination campaign in Chad.

The American Red Cross plays a crucial role in the Country Platform as both a primary funder and a coordinating partner at IFRC headquarters. Two staff members from the American Red Cross have been assigned to the IFRC to help manage the platform, identify priority areas, recruit consultants and coordinate

deployments. Dr. Amate was the first consultant to be deployed through this platform, supporting the measles vaccination campaign in Chad.

“Their commitment, often in difficult conditions, shows what is possible when people unite around a shared goal: protecting children’s health,” Dr. Amate told the American Red Cross.

His role involves both strategic planning and on-the-ground coordination. He is one of many Red Cross representatives worldwide supporting the rollout of measles and measles-rubella

vaccination campaigns. This work encompasses the entire lifecycle of a public health initiative, including planning, monitoring, reporting and providing technical assistance.

“The platform helps ensure that vaccination campaigns are designed to reach children who are most likely to be missed due to geography, insecurity, access barriers or social factors,” Dr. Amate said. “By prioritizing equity, we help countries protect the children who need these vaccines the most.”

Beyond logistics, Dr. Amate also helps coordinate educational materials so communities can better understand how to identify these diseases and why vaccination is critical to stopping their spread. To achieve this, he works closely with national and subnational stakeholders to develop key messages and training materials. He supports readiness assessments to ensure that preparations are on track and that the campaign launches on time.

In parts of the region, measles and rubella cases can reach hundreds or more during outbreaks. Dr. Amate explains that many people living in remote areas may not fully understand how contagious measles is, or that rubella can cause severe birth defects if an expecting mother becomes infected.

## Helping All Around the World

Millions of people in countries across the globe are experiencing devastating disasters that have taken their homes, their livelihoods, and tragically for some, their loved ones. This International Services Activity Update provides a brief snapshot of some significant international disasters that the American Red Cross has recently monitored or responded to.

### HONG KONG FIRE

In late November, a massive fire broke out at the Wang Fuk Court apartment complex in the Tai Po District of Hong Kong. Seven of the eight tower blocks rapidly went up in flames, as the fire spread both upwards and between the blocks. The building housed nearly 2,000 units and due to the rapid spread of the fire, many residents were trapped inside. Extensive rescue operations were executed in response to the level 5 alarm fire, but it took more than 40 hours and over 2,000 firefighters to get under control. It was one of the worst fires in Hong Kong’s history, more than 160 people lost their lives.

The Hong Kong Red Cross mobilized immediately

What makes this reality especially heartbreaking, he notes, is that both diseases are preventable.

“They may also not know that two doses of the measles or measles-rubella vaccine, given at the recommended intervals, provide lifelong protection,” he said. “These diseases are preventable with safe, effective vaccines, yet outbreaks continue when immunity gaps persist.”

The true payoff comes in moments that data alone cannot capture. It is the sight of a child receiving protection for the first time. The knowledge that a single vaccine can prevent lifelong complications, or even save a life, particularly in communities that are remote or hesitant due to lack of information.

“Seeing children, especially those in their second year of life, receive the measles vaccine for the very first time is incredibly moving,” Dr. Amate shared. “It’s a reminder that behind every data point is a child whose future is being protected. Those moments reinforce why this work matters.”

Molly Dalton

following the fire to provide emergency assistance in coordination with authorities. The teams provided emergency support, including first aid, sheltering and mental health services.

Red Cross teams also activated their psychological support hotline for people affected by the fires. As families were displaced, Hong Kong Red Cross staff distributed essential supplies such as pillows, quilts, mattresses, chargers and personal hygiene items. Teams will continue to provide mental health support, relief supplies, support with transitional housing and emergency cash assistance for those in need.



One of the worst fires in Hong Kong’s history occurred at the Wang Fuk Court apartment complex where seven of the eight towers rapidly went up in flames, trapping many residents inside. Hong Kong Red Cross photo.

The American Red Cross has contributed more than \$110,000 to the Hong Kong Red Cross to assist with providing psychosocial support and cash assistance.

## **TROPICAL CYCLONES MADAGASCAR**

Two tropical cyclones (what we know as hurricanes in the U.S.) made landfall in Madagascar just ten days apart, causing flooding and major damage.

Tropical Cyclone Fytia made landfall first on January 31, 2026, as a Category 3 cyclone. Fytia triggered widespread flooding across northwestern Madagascar, damaging schools and health facilities. Moreover, the flooding led to extensive losses of rice fields and livestock, severely undermining livelihoods and food security for thousands. Some areas can only be accessed by air, hampering emergency response efforts.



The Malagasy Red Cross Society conducting assessments in Tamatave following Tropical Cyclone Gezani. Photo by Malagasy Red Cross Society (MRCS).

Ten days later, Tropical Cyclone Gezani roared ashore as a Category 4 Cyclone, with maximum sustained winds of 155 miles per hour and heavy rains hitting central-western Madagascar. A total of 478,000 people were affected by Gezani, with the highest impact in Toamasina, Madagascar's second largest city. Roughly 75 percent of Toamasina was devastated by severe structural damage, uprooted trees and extensive infrastructure collapse.

The impact from the two cyclones has been severe, with 800 reported injuries, more than 70 deaths and 15 individuals missing. In addition to the

devastation from the storms, some of the cyclone-affected districts are also facing additional complications including Mpox outbreaks in northern regions and food insecurity in eastern and southern Madagascar.

The Malagasy Red Cross Society deployed early action preparedness activities to support communities prior to the landfall of both cyclones. For Tropical Cyclone Fytia, 70 volunteers were mobilized to carry out preparedness and response activities, including the distribution of shelter kits; kitchen sets; water, sanitation and hygiene kits; and dignity kits. For Cyclone Gezani, nearly 90 volunteers were deployed to deliver early warnings and support across eight primary sites. These volunteers alerted approximately 300 people and distributed dignity kits. They also conducted alert messaging and awareness activities.

The American Red Cross has contributed \$300,000 to the IFRC Emergency Appeal to assist the Malagasy Red Cross Society.

## **SRI LANKA**

Tropical Cyclone Ditwah made landfall on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka in the early morning of November 28, 2025, unleashing unprecedented rainfall and severe weather impacts across the country for several days. The stalled system led to significant flooding and landslides across all 25 provinces of the country. In total, the tropical cyclone, and resulting flooding, impacted more than 1.7 million people, destroyed more than 100,000 homes and tragically killed over 650 people, with more than 150 individuals still reported as missing.

The cyclone also caused massive infrastructure damage, submerging roads, destroying bridges and cutting off key transportation routes. Months later, access remains limited – more than 200 roads and over 20 bridges are still damaged. Widespread power outages and damaged communication systems further isolated communities and limited their ability to access essential goods such as food, medicine and clean water. Remote areas were incredibly difficult to access and crops across the country were destroyed.

The President of Sri Lanka declared a nationwide

state of emergency. Across the country, people are in need of emergency shelter and supplies, drinking water, food, hygiene items and access to health services. Mental health and psychosocial support for those impacted is also a concern.



Sri Lanka Red Cross Society volunteers engage in cleanup campaigns in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah. Photo by Sri Lanka Red Cross Society.

In response, the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SRCLS) activated all 25 branches and deployed some 300 volunteers to help. SRCLS has focused on clean-up campaigns, distributing relief supplies, providing emergency first aid services and supporting cash and volunteer assistance programs. To date, SRCLS has reached more than 46,000 people through their relief efforts.

The American Red Cross has contributed \$300,000 to the IFRC Emergency Appeal to assist the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society with providing cash grants for shelter and recovery, along with water, sanitation and hygiene programs.

### FLOODING IN MOZAMBIQUE

There is a growing crisis in Mozambique driven by prolonged heavy rains and widespread flooding across the country. Official data indicates more than 724,000 people have been affected by the flooding nationwide. Tragically, more than 200 people have died and nearly 300 were injured in

## More Ways to Get Involved this Summer

### Make Waves for a Lifesaving Mission!

Dive in this June with the annual **15 Mile Swim Challenge** hosted by the American Red Cross. By joining, you will support swim lessons to help prevent drownings and build competence in the

the disaster.

More than 180,000 homes were flooded, leaving more than 400,000 people displaced. Additionally, damage to roads and sanitation infrastructure has been extensive, limiting access to some areas, disrupting the delivery of help. Preliminary damage assessments estimate losses at \$220 million USD.

More rain is forecast which will bring more flooding to thousands of families that have already experienced flooding this year. Across the country, people are in need of emergency shelter, food, water, emergency health services, and hygiene items.

Since the rains began, the Mozambique Red Cross Society (CVM) has deployed response teams,

implemented anticipatory actions, supported evacuations and prepositioned emergency supplies.

Currently, CVM teams are supporting shelters, assisting with search and rescue efforts and providing first aid services.



Since mid-December 2025, persistent and intense rainfall – combined with high upstream river inflows – has led to a large-scale flood emergency in Mozambique. Photo by IFRC.

The American Red Cross has contributed \$300,000 to the IFRC Emergency Appeal to assist the Mozambique Red Cross Society with cash grants.

Jennifer Warga

water. Start a fundraiser and earn your exclusive Red Cross swim medal when you receive your first donation.

Past participants have had great things to say

about their experiences:

- "I loved this. Thank you for getting me back into the water."
- "This challenge was great for me personally, it helped me to swim more than I have ever swam and raise a good amount of money for the Red Cross cause."
- "This was a fun challenge! It pushed me to finish my swims and brought awareness of the Red Cross to my FB friends."

Ready to help us make a splash for a great cause? Visit [redcross.org/NMswim](http://redcross.org/NMswim) to register.



### **Make a Meaningful Impact: Donate to the Red Cross from Your Donor-Advised Fund**

Do you have a donor-advised fund (DAF)?

Recommending a grant to the American Red Cross directly from your donor-advised fund can help ensure critical aid reaches people in need when it matters most.

Making a gift from your DAF is straightforward. Many fund sponsors allow you to recommend grants online, such as through DAF Direct® which enables donors to make contributions quickly and securely from participating financial institutions. If your sponsoring organization doesn't participate in DAF Direct, you can still recommend a grant by asking your fund administrator to send it directly to the American Red Cross. You can visit [redcross.org/NMdaf](http://redcross.org/NMdaf) to access DAF Direct or to find our federal tax ID.

DAFs are increasingly popular because they may offer tax advantages at the time you fund the account. Tax rules and individual circumstances vary, so please consult with your financial advisor for the tax implications of your donation.

By using your donor-advised fund to support the American Red Cross, you can bring help, hope and stability to communities when they need it most.

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. Or go to the [Red Cross Nursing Network](#) and select a link under "View Previous Issues."

**Thank you!**