

RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



ON THE HORIZON

- July 26, [National Disability Independence Day](#)
- July 30, [International Day of Friendship](#)
- Aug. 12, [International Youth Day](#)



16

Disaster responses in June.
Clients helped: 65. *Does not include Montana flooding response.



MILESTONES

SHERRILYN HAMILTON, 5 years



TO DONATE BLOOD

Visit online [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org)
 Or you can call 800-RED-CROSS



Offering comfort



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAYLE HAYES

Kathryn Parker cradles her children as they are evacuated by helicopter after flooding stranded her family in the Absaroka Range in southwestern Montana.

Evacuated family lands at shelter

When Kathryn and Scott Palmer planned their Montana summer vacation, they had no idea it would involve a hasty ride on a Chinook helicopter and a brief stay at a Montana Red Cross shelter.

The Virginia couple, who visits the state frequently, knew things were a bit out of ordinary when they arrived at their cabin in the Absaroka Range in southwestern Montana on

Memorial Day weekend to find a foot of snow on the ground. Still, they weren't overly concerned.

But then that snow began to melt, and the rains came. And came. And came some more, washing out the only road in or out. They and close to 50 others also staying in the area were

SEE STRANDED, PAGE 3

Bozeman pastor opens church to help

June's catastrophic flooding and last summer's fires in and around Yellowstone National Park have served as a reminder that "we have each other's backs," Pastor Heidi Hester said.

For Hester and her Hope Lutheran congregation in Bozeman, Mont., that meant working with the Red Cross to provide an evacuation center for people fleeing flood waters – locals whose homes were impacted, Yellowstone workers, and tourists whose plans were suddenly upended.

"It was just the right thing to do," Hester said. "This is part of what it means to be a church here, to be part of the Gallatin Valley. This is our backyard."

Hosting the shelter coincided with vacation Bible school at Hope Lutheran, but church members and school leaders pivoted to accommodate the shelter, too, and helped haul in supplies for the Red Cross.

"It's important to give people shelter, physically, emotionally, and spiritual," Hester said.



Pastor Heidi Hester and her congregation opened the Hope Lutheran Church building in Bozeman to the Red Cross, so volunteers could help those affected by the nearby flooding.

"We aim to live that out."

Red Cross disaster volunteer Linda Racicot of Bozeman said it was a challenge finding a place for evacuees with the usual location in Livingston under flood risk and many other churches tied up with vacation Bible schools.

"What a relief to have a place where we could open, and how generous of them to make room for us," she said. "They were flexible and generous."

SEE CHURCH, PAGE 3

New disaster manager aboard

We are pleased to announce that Matthew Lurker has joined our team as the new disaster program manager for Eastern Idaho.

Matt began his emergency management career as a security policeman in the U.S. Air Force. The bulk of his Air Force service was as a response force team leader for the national nuclear arsenal with Air Force Space Command at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Mont.

After leaving the Air Force, he attended Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, where he completed the paramedic program. He then returned to Montana and worked for Billings Clinic as a phlebotomist, trauma technician, cardiology technician and training center faculty.

Matt returned to law enforcement as a deputy sheriff with the Madison County Sheriff's Office and as a firefighter/EMT with the Rexburg Fire Department. He then taught for Texas A&M University/TEEX as a critical infrastructure instructor assigned to help establish the United Arab Emirates Critical National Infrastructure Authority Academy.

He was later recruited by U.S. State Department contractors where he served as an instructor for their Diplomatic Security Worldwide Protective Services program. He also served as an imbedded capacity building instructor for the U.S. State Department's International Police and Peacekeeping Operations program.

After filling assignments across the

Middle East, West Africa and Central Asia, Matt accepted an appointment to serve as the Protective Services Program Manager for NASA at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

Matt then returned to Idaho where he served as the chief of police in Iona. He later accepted an appointment to become the chief administrative officer for the City of Laurel in Montana. Matt has since served as a high school and middle school teacher.

He has also served as an officer in the Civil Air Patrol simultaneous with his professional career.

In his free time, he enjoys the outdoors, space and educational programs, and spending quality time with his wife CoDele, six children and three grandchildren.

Blood drives need cordial helpers

This July, the American Red Cross is recruiting compassionate volunteers to support blood drives. The position description is below, as well as a reminder to gather socially (and virtually) with fellow volunteers, and other news for volunteers.

POSITION OF THE MONTH.

Donor Ambassadors ensure that blood donors have a pleasant and fulfilling experience.

Title: Donor Ambassador at Blood Drives

Location: All blood collection sites could use help, but needs are highest in Missoula, Bozeman, Idaho Falls and the Boise area.

Time Requirements: Preferred would be one 4- to 6-hour shift per month for six months.

Needed availability is Monday through Friday during business hours when blood drives are held.

Tasks: You help blood drives run smoothly by providing excellent customer service, assisting with the registration process, offering refreshments and thanking donors for their contribution.

IN THE KNOW



RED CROSS NEWS & HAPPENINGS

Questions? Contact Gini at IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or by phone/text at 406-493-8778 for more information.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.

We know the world is constantly changing right now, and we want to make sure we are communicating these changes and updates with you in the ways – and at the pace – that you prefer.

Below is a link to a survey asking how we should best communicate these breaking news updates with you – i.e. through Volunteer Connection, RED ALERTS, email, etc. – and how often you would like to receive this information.

We stress this survey is focused on those big breaking news items – like changes to the mask policy.

Please take a few minutes and fill out this quick survey, found here:

[https://](https://volunteerconnection.redcross.org/?nd=vms_load_form&form_id=10958)

volunteerconnection.redcross.org/?nd=vms_load_form&form_id=10958

KETCHUP WITH FRIENDS.

Please join fellow volunteers at our social time, Tuesday, July 12, from 7:30 - 8 p.m. If you attend, you will be eligible to win a door prize. Click [here](#) to join the meeting.



If you join and don't have access, please send Nate Gilbert an email at Nathan.Gilbert@RedCross.org and we will see what we can do to help get you connected.

We hope you can join us this month. See you all there!

Here is a link to a video if you need help joining the meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYdZYP9tITg>



Paul Ayers

Longtime Red Cross volunteer, 69, dies

Recently we received the heart-breaking news that our friend and colleague, Red Cross volunteer Paul Ayers, passed away at his home in Meridian. Paul was 69.

Paul has been a hero to us all and was an amazing Red Crosser – often the first to respond and the last to leave a Red Cross assignment. He provided both a calming and commanding presence.

Among his many hats, Paul was the disaster action team coordinator for Ada County and an emergency response vehicle lead and was a Red Cross volunteer for the past six years.

The Red Cross has lost a giant, and we've lost a friend. Please lean on each other and don't hesitate to reach out.



PHOTOS BY JOHN MCGREW

Red Cross of Idaho, Montana and East Oregon CEO Nicole Sirak Irwin joins Teresa Beall and Joe Baldi during damage assessment in Carbon County. Volunteers from across the division deployed to Montana to help out.

Stranded: ‘I am forever grateful’

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

suddenly stranded.

“We started talking about provisioning food,” she said.

Before those conversations got very far, the Montana National Guard arrived in Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters, whisking the Palmers, their two children – George, 4, and Charlie, 2 – and the other campers out of the Montana wilderness.

A photo of Kathryn during their helicopter ride hugging her boys, who were wrapped in a National Guard jacket to stay warm, is making the rounds on social media. It appears on Page 1.

“It was wild,” Kathryn said.

Once the Palmers were safely on the ground in Red Lodge, Red Cross volunteer Hank Nowak drove them to the Red Cross shelter at the county fairgrounds. There another Red Crosser, Barbara Miner, greeted, calmed and comforted them.

“She was an absolute angel,” Kathryn said.

Barbara got the two boys, who were understandably shaken by the whole experience, sandwiches.

“Then she came back with a mitt full of cookies and Gatorade and water,” Kathryn said. “I felt like I just blinked and everything was at our fingertips. We had all of our family’s basic needs met, and we had the opportunity to take showers or a nap and access to anything from food and hygiene products to



Montana Red Cross Executive Director Diane Wright attends an incident briefing with Gov. Gianforte and Red Lodge Mayor Kristen Cogswell.

baby supplies.

“For a very chaotic situation, everything was so well organized and ran so smoothly.”

The team also began helping the Palmers make arrangements to get to Billings so they could book a flight.

Now back home in the Washington, D.C. area, Kathryn said her boys are still trying to process everything they went through.

“I’ve got two young kids whose sense of safety and security was totally rocked,” she said.

Kathryn, who has been visiting the Red Lodge area since she was a child and thinks of it as a second home, is also digesting what she saw there.

“It was difficult seeing so much of Red Lodge under devastation knowing what we had come from,” she said. “The inconvenience of a road being washed out is one thing but for people to be losing their homes to flooding is

quite another.”

In less than a week, Red Cross opened seven emergency shelters and evacuation centers across the state in response to widespread flooding. With the help of its partners, Red Crossers served countless meals and snacks and delivered water, cleanup kits and other emergency supplies. Now the organization is shifting into recovery phase, working with emergency officials to assess the damage and provide financial assistance and mental health care to those impacted.

And while her family didn’t end up spending the night in a Red Cross shelter, Kathryn is thankful to know that option was there if they needed it and appreciates the comfort and care they received.

“Everyone was so kind, so courteous, informed and helpful,” she said. “I am forever grateful for what felt like personalized support by the American Red Cross volunteers.”

Church: Generous

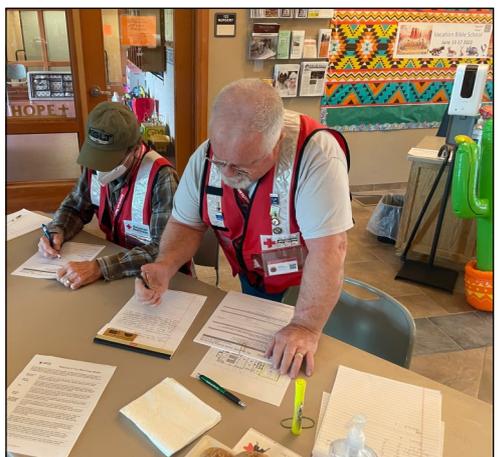
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The unprecedented flooding has caused heartache throughout the region and around the world among people who love the Yellowstone area.

“It’s just heartbreaking to hear the stories of loss and devastation, the loss of homes, the displacement of people and animals,” Linda said.

“We were grateful we could provide a safe place to nourish people, a place for them to clear their heads and decide what they’re going to do next.”

The church also accepted donations to support the Red Cross response and for the Montana Synod Disaster Response Team, and, of course, offered prayers for those affected: “people, animals, all of creation – and for those who stepped up to help in times of trouble.”



Red Cross volunteers Ernie Lytle and workers set up an evacuation center in a Bozeman church to help