Red Cross Looking for Regional Nurse Leader Volunteers

The American Red Cross is looking for nurses who would like to serve their community by volunteering as Nursing Network Regional Nurse Leaders (RNL).

What is a Regional Nurse Leader? More than 20,000 health professionals are part of the Red Cross, serving when disaster strikes, teaching health and safety courses, helping develop programs, serving on governing boards and more. Across the country, RNLs help recruit nurses and other health professional volunteers to serve across all Red Cross lines of service.

Do RNLs work alone? RNLs work with Red Cross Regional Volunteer Services Officers along with Nursing Network Division and Associate Division Nurse Leaders to secure nurses and health professionals to join the work of the Red Cross. These groups all work together to secure nurses and other health professionals interested in helping their community through the lines of service of the Red Cross.

A new position, the Nursing Network Engagement Specialist, is open to volunteers who will assist the RNLs as they cover their very wide geography. Depending on need, there may be more than one RNL in a Red Cross region.

In addition, a National Director leads the Nursing Network, bridging it with the other elements of the Red Cross nursing network: the National Nursing Committee, the nurse consultants, and the Office of the Chief Nurse. The majority of roles in the nursing network are volunteer positions.

How do nurses serve the Red Cross? Nurses are vital to the Red Cross. They bring with them extensive education and skills, ready to provide community care and assist in all health matters.

Their expertise in clinical knowledge and skills, as well as leadership, health policy, system improvement, research and evidence-based practice is needed to help the Red Cross improve service to individuals, families and communities.

There are many different ways nurses can be part of the Red Cross. Nurses are a vital part of Red Cross disaster response. They deploy to large disasters, provide basic health services in our Red Cross shelters, as well as assess shelter residents who may have functional or access needs. They provide disease surveillance, care for minor illnesses as well as help individuals impacted by disaster by replacing things like lost medications and eyeglasses.

Nurses serve as instructors for such lifesaving classes as community CPR, Nurse Assistant Training and more. They help teach the public about the need for blood donors and blood products to help patients in their fight back to good health.

Nurses support veterans and members of the military and their families, providing military support case management, SAF emergency communications and behavioral health support for military spouses and children. Nurses can support the Red Cross Measles & Rubella Initiative which vaccinates children around the world in an effort to stop the diseases. Partnering with the United Nations Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF and the World Health Organization, one billion children in more than 80 countries have been vaccinated since the program was launched in 2001.

Nurses can also serve on regional and divisional Red Cross boards. They can help organize and support fundraising campaigns and support other Red Cross campaigns and programs.

If you are interested in serving as a Regional Nurse Leader, or as a Red Cross volunteer, please email RedCrossNurse@redcross.org.
It's Red Cross Month, a time when the American Red Cross honors our nation's heroes who help people in need in their community, across the country and around the world.

More than 300,000 of these heroes help families find shelter after a home fire. They donate blood to help trauma victims and cancer patients. They deliver comfort items to military members in hospitals around the world. They use their lifesaving skills to save someone from a heart attack, drowning, or choking. They volunteer their time to help those in need.

During Red Cross Month, become a hero too. Join the Red Cross.
1. **Become a Red Cross volunteer.** You can help in your local community.
2. **Give blood** and help a patient on their road to recovery.
3. **Take a class;** be able to help during an emergency.
4. **Make a plan.** Develop a preparedness plan with members of your household.
5. **Make a financial donation.** Your support will allow us to help those in need.

**A LITTLE HISTORY** For more than 135 years, American Red Cross workers have been an essential part of our nation’s response to war, natural disaster and other human suffering. *Read about the Red Cross in American history here.*

Since 1906, the office of president has been part of the structure of the American Red Cross. United States President Woodrow Wilson agreed to serve in this position in 1913, establishing a tradition followed by all subsequent presidents to become Honorary President of the American Red Cross. That title was changed to Honorary Chairman in 1947.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt designated March as Red Cross Month. Since that time, all of our U.S. presidents have designated March as Red Cross Month to recognize how our organization helps people across the country and around the world. Read the proclamation by President Donald J. Trump here.

The Red Cross provides help and support in many ways to people in this country and around the world by:
- Responding to as many as 64,000 disasters big and small in this country every year.
- Providing 24-hour support to members of the military, veterans and their families at home and around the world.
- Collecting and distributing about 40 percent of the nation’s blood supply.
- Training millions of people in first aid, water safety and other life-saving skills.
- Helping millions of people around the world through disaster management and disease prevention activities.

During Red Cross Month, become an everyday hero, become a part of the Red Cross. More information is available on how you can help through your local Red Cross chapter or by visiting the Red Cross “Ways to Help” information.

One way to help: apply to become an employee!

**AJN Features Red Cross Volunteer on March Cover**

The *American Journal of Nursing (AJN)* March issue contains several American Red Cross mentions to celebrate “March is Red Cross Month”. The AJN cover highlights a new Red Cross volunteer, Nam Ngo, who helps in the Los Angeles, California area. Nam Ngo responded to the call for health professionals and helped people affected by Hurricane Matthew in late 2016.

Also in the AJN March issue is a blog, “The Call to Service Is Personal: From Vietnam to Red Cross Volunteer,” written by the late Bob Hassmiller.
Academic Service Learning Partnership with American University of the Caribbean Benefits Home Fire Campaign

In June, 2016, the South Florida regional Volunteer Services team was connected to the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine (AUC) by the Red Cross Nursing Network as a result of a national partnership between the Red Cross and AUC. AUC medical students can do their clinical rotations at various locations in the United States, including in Miami; AUC’s administrative office is in Coral Gables, FL. The partnership allows AUC to help support Red Cross chapters by volunteering in community initiatives, and gives AUC students and alumni community service opportunities through Red Cross chapters. Since our initial meeting in June our local partnership with AUC has grown tremendously. We began working with Gustavo Galue, Admissions Manager, and Shannon Toher, Communications Manager, on volunteer opportunities that they could offer both students and staff.

After AUC expressed interest in the Home Fire Campaign we immediately connected them with Monica Rusconi, Disaster Program Manager for the Greater Miami & The Keys Chapter. They first partnered with us on August 11, 2016 by sending six students and staff to install smoke alarms at the Little River Mobile Home Park. They enjoyed the event so much that an additional 17 students and staff participated on October 22 at the Trinidad Court Mobile Home Park in Northwest Miami-Dade County. Altogether their team has helped us to install 114 smoke alarms in those two communities.

Knowing the importance of smoke alarms, AUC has helped us publicize the Home Fire Campaign by posting information on their website, blog, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Since their participation in the events, some students have also become volunteers. One student in particular, Molly Kallins, attended a Home Fire Campaign event and has since joined the Home Fire Campaign team to help install additional alarms.

Since then our partnership with AUC has continued to grow. They have invited us to attend their admissions events, including one recently on February 10. Molly Kallins and two other volunteers attended the event to represent the Red Cross and to speak with alumni, faculty and staff about our ongoing partnership and how they can volunteer with us. We look forward to our continued partnership and to engaging AUC students and staff in many different volunteer opportunities.

Inspiring Nurse Engagement in the Eastern New York Region

“Retire and Inspire,” is my motto after over 40 years in professional nursing. What better way to do that than to volunteer with the American Red Cross on the Volunteer Services Committee for my Eastern New York Region. Our sub-committee for nurse recruitment was just the right fit!

Nurses are incredible people. Not only do nurses excel in clinical settings, but the profession helps us become experts in teaching, assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating. Time management: just ask a nurse! A nurse sees and cares for multi-generational, multi-cultural and multi-lingual patients while maintaining objectivity. Nurses are family-oriented, business-oriented and community-oriented. The skills and expertise that nurses bring is a great fit for the Red Cross.
Our Volunteer Services Committee members in the Eastern New York Region include staff, board members and volunteers. We are from all different professions, ages and experience. We meet every two months and sub-committee meetings are held in between. I serve on the sub-committee for nurse recruitment for the Region.

Our goals have been to strategize and enhance the recruitment effort already being done by the staff. Goals are set to be reached within specific time frames and tools have been developed to track our progress.

We have met with community and private colleges in the area, including nursing and health science department chairpersons and student volunteer connections groups, as well as with the Foundation of New York State Nurses, nurse alumni associations, Disaster Cycle Services, Preparedness Health and Safety Services, Services to the Armed Forces, town supervisors, libraries, physician offices, long-term care ombudsmen and hospice organizations. Individual meetings are set up with nursing students who show interest in volunteering.

One student told us that she “had the best experience ever in volunteering” with us. Allied healthcare professionals and, of course, previous colleagues, friends and family complete the list of potential recruits.

They say the best opportunity for recruitment is through a current volunteer and I am definitely an example and advocate of that. I tell everyone about the Red Cross and never tire of educating about the many diverse opportunities for volunteering available. My motto sums up my approach: “Retire and Inspire!”

A special acknowledgement and thanks to our Committee Chair, Elizabeth Peters, who is a board member and leads our committee with her expertise; to Mary Beth Sonne, RN and board member also, who has partnered with me to connect and contact the above-mentioned meetings; and to Lauren Whitman who is the chair for our sub-committee and is a Volunteer Services Specialist with the American Red Cross in Albany, New York.

Red Cross Nurse April Wood Recognized for Her Leadership

“I have a 12-hour day this week and a 16-hour day next week.” This response came from April Wood, BSN, RN, NREMT-B, when I was setting an interview date. We agreed upon a meeting for a Monday morning which was delayed because of a family emergency. Such is the commitment Wood has to her job and her family.

I first met April Wood in 2007 when she became the Senior Associate for Disaster Health Services (DHS). She had been an American Red Cross volunteer since 2001. Wood is a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The first part of her nursing career was spent assisting patients dealing with personal disasters in the Emergency Room at the University of Tennessee Medical Center, Emory Crawford-Long Hospital in Atlanta and Inova Fairfax Hospital in Northern Virginia. After serving on numerous disaster assignments as a volunteer, she applied for the Red Cross DHS position to influence change on a national scale and enhance the volunteer experience. There were educational, community and volunteer engagement opportunities and most importantly, the opportunity to serve those affected by national disasters.

In 2008 her title became DHS Manager. During her DHS leadership tenure her achievements included the development of a peer-to-peer DHS national network, the development and implementation of three DHS leadership summits, increased social media interface, the launch of Red Cross Ready RN, the development and implementation of a state-wide DHS Advisors program and the establishment of a formal partnership with the Medical Reserve Corps.

In 2011 Wood applied for and was selected as the Director of the National Partnerships Program,
then was later promoted to Senior Director of Community Mobilization and Partnerships for the Red Cross. In this position, she is responsible for the national partner portfolio of strategic partnerships and programs for mobilizing the community, such as the Home Fire Campaign. She works with nearly 100 diverse organizations involved in providing disaster assistance, especially those with established services for clients with disabilities, provisions for the needs of children and spiritual needs and for limited English-speaking communities.

She has recently worked with Partnership with Native Americans to extend reach and build trust with tribal leaders in NC due to flooding from Hurricane Matthew. This partnership opportunity includes the offer of disaster education to Native American disaster volunteers, to support disaster responses in their immediate geographical area. The goal is to provide a robust network of services to clients impacted by disasters through partnerships. Partnership efforts are focused on four areas: to increase coordination, enhance service delivery capacity, increase expertise via partnering and to extend reach and trust through partnerships.

Wood is leading partner engagement for a national campaign to reduce deaths and injuries from home fires. Presently, the death statistics report that on average seven times a day someone dies secondary to a home fire. There are approximately 2,500 fire-related deaths each year in the US. This campaign hopes to decrease this number over the next five years and already has 197 documented lives saved to date.

Wood is chairperson for the National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) Board of Directors. In this position, she leads and provides strategic direction for the organization and the VOAD movement in addition to ensuring governance and providing oversight for financial and membership development. National VOAD provides a forum for the 4 C’s of communication, collaboration, coordination, and cooperation while making recommendations and supporting capacity building for state and local VOADs regarding disaster relief and recovery. In an effort to champion diversity and inclusion, the diversity of the board increased significantly in the last few years while growing the membership by 10% last year. Wood led efforts to establish a VOAD Disaster Health committee which is flourishing.

Wood is a liaison to the Secretary’s Operations Center at the Department of Health and Human Services and presently serves on the National Nursing Committee of the Red Cross and on the Advisory Council for the Center for Disaster Philanthropy. She also served as a member of the Institute of Medicine’s Forum on Medical and Public Health Preparedness for Catastrophic Events and was on the Federal Nursing Service Council for nearly a decade.

In 2013 she was invited to serve on the Leadership Council for the Classy Awards. This award is the largest social impact award in the United States honoring champions of social progress and collaboration around social problems. Wood’s leadership experience with the Red Cross, social media and community partnerships certainly qualified her to identify talented nominees for this prestigious award.

With more than sixteen years of experience in leadership roles, in 2016 April Wood was selected from 400 candidates as one of the Washington Business Journal’s “40 Under 40” business leaders in Washington, DC in 2016. This award recognizes young business women and men who have already established themselves as leaders in their industry.

What will the future bring to April Wood? Or rather, what will April Wood bring to the future? Her commitment and energy, her ability to affect policies benefiting those affected by disaster and her interpersonal skills have been demonstrated by years of leadership and interaction with volunteers. Her work to bring people and organizations together will assure her continued positive impact on the Red Cross, her community and the nation.
As the 100th anniversary of United States participation in World War I approaches, the work of American Red Cross nurses assigned to the Army and Navy Nurse Corps is well known. The story of American Red Cross civilian nurses sent overseas in 1917 deserves the same recognition.

During the war, a small group of public health nurses found themselves in France helping infants and children in dire need of health care. Before they could complete their work, deteriorating battle conditions required their transfer to Red Cross Military Hospitals and the French Service de Sante, near the front lines. The nurses never expected to be saving the lives of the wounded rather than enhancing the lives of civilians.

The American Red Cross Commission to France created the Children’s Bureau, the Bureau of Refugees and the Bureau of Tuberculosis under the Department of Civil Affairs. The work of the Children’s Bureau covered the entire country from Le Havre on the English Channel to Marseilles on the Mediterranean. The aim for all the child welfare efforts became a universal slogan, “Sauvons les Bebes!” “Save the Babies!”

"Refugee child with tuberculosis at an American Red Cross children’s hospital in France."

Dr. William Palmer Lucas, Professor of Pediatrics, University of California and chief nurse Elizabeth H. Ashe, founder of the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Association in San Francisco, led the Children’s Bureau in the summer of 1917. Twelve Red Cross public health nurses already serving in France helped with the early programs. Many of these nurses arrived on the Red Cross Mercy Ship in 1914, including Mary K. Nelson, Marion McCune Rice, and Helen Kerrigan. American Red Cross aides, fluent in French, volunteered to help the nurses and interpret their instructions. Many American women physicians offered their services in dispensaries and hospitals.

As its first project, the Bureau founded a Children’s Colony in a French military cantonment for 500 mothers and children. A hospital opened in Toul with 150 beds for children and 50 beds for a maternity ward. A traveling dispensary with a physician, nurse and aide held clinics twice a week in small villages around the town.

In Paris, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Evian and St. Etienne, the Bureau established infant welfare stations and hospitals. Older children received food and educational health programs in schools. French artists created cartoon pamphlets with topics on dental care, nutrition, and basic hygiene. The idea of playgrounds for children, new to the French, received immediate approval across the country for safe recreation. The nurses taught 27,000 children how to play.

The Bureau and the Rockefeller Commission opened training centers and funded short, month-long courses, taught by Red Cross nurses, for French women to become “health visitors.” Once trained, the health visitors provided the necessary follow-up medical and social care for treated infants, keeping records of the children’s progress. In creating the health visitors, the Children’s Bureau not only saved lives but allowed hundreds of women to earn a living.

With the cooperation of the Rockefeller Commission, the Bureau built tuberculosis treatment centers, necessary for the thousands of refugees fleeing northern France. The largest, the Trudeau Sanatorium near Paris, became a model for other hospitals. Near Lyon, a country estate, the Chateau des Halles became a convalescent home for children and later, an orphanage. The French government donated the building and the American Red Cross furnished it and staffed its programs. After the war, the French continued to operate the orphanage, still using the
little beds in 1947 that the Red Cross had provided.

The nurses involved with all the facilities had similar backgrounds and distinguished careers as American nurses. One example, Eva Louise Smyth, graduated from the Massachusetts Training School in Malden. She worked as an office and school nurse before joining the Red Cross Town and Country Nursing Service in 1915. She served the rural community of Doylestown, Pennsylvania until joining the Harvard Unit assigned to the British Expeditionary Forces.

In October 1917, she went to St. Etienne to open a dispensary. Elizabeth Ashe reported, “Miss Smyth went to St. Etienne eight months ago. She never asked for help. She went to the Normal School and asked for volunteers who spoke English to help her. Twenty-four women responded and she taught them . . . all have had splendid training . . . she expects to have enough nurses from her classes to open the children’s hospital without asking for American nurses.” She started a boys’ club and sewing classes for girls. The girls made the articles needed for the dispensary and the boys cleaned up the streets. Smyth organized a child welfare exposition and 80,000 people attended from July 11 through July 28. School teachers brought entire classes to see the educational posters and attend clinics. Another nurse wrote to Ashe, “The doctor and nurse at St. Etienne have accomplished more good in public health than any place in France. Their cooperation with prominent city officials and the people of St. Etienne was truly remarkable.”

By late August 1918, the outbreak of influenza in American army camps caused more changes. Children’s hospitals were turned over to the military, including Hospitals Violet and Holtzman. Ida F. Butler served as chief nurse at both institutions and started caring for soldiers instead of infants. In 1936, she became the director of the Red Cross Nursing Service.

When the Children’s Bureau closed in May 1919, four permanent hospitals remained located in Paris, St. Etienne, Foug and Rouen. In all, the Red Cross operated 25 hospitals, 99 dispensaries and treated more than 200,000 children. Additionally, two million refugees received support and medical treatment from the Red Cross. The American Junior Red Cross sent $100,000, collected in dimes and quarters, from the “Children of America to the Children of France” to support established health centers. Above all, American Red Cross nurses met the needs of civilian and military requests with outstanding success. During the next three years, hundreds of these nurses continued to serve in American Red Cross Commissions to the Balkans, Poland, Russia, Palestine and Romania.
The first time I encountered Eileen Hadbavny, I had no idea who she was. I was a Disaster Mental Health and Disaster Health Services volunteer in my local Upstate SC Chapter. It was one of those times that tornadoes had struck multiple states, wreaking havoc on thousands. There was a huge need for disaster health and mental health volunteers to deploy and we needed new volunteers. I was asked to teach two courses in a specially-equipped room at a Mental Health Center which was broadcast live to potential new volunteers across the state. I had the ability for direct feedback with participants, but was intrigued by the petite lady in the Charleston Mental Health Center scurrying around the classroom and assisting participants.

Later, I met Eileen Hadbavny at a SC Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) training in Columbia, SC. She told me that she was the person who assisted with that training in Charleston and introduced me to someone who had recorded the class, giving me a copy of it. Eileen told me that if volunteers were needed, she wanted to help in any way she could. During the MRC meeting, she raised her hand and introduced herself and mentioned the need for more Red Cross volunteers. She introduced another Red Cross nurse who had just been appointed as the State Nurse Liaison (SNL).

It was not terribly long before Eileen and I were both tapped for leadership roles in the Nursing Network by Sandra Whitmore, then the Mid-Atlantic Division Nurse Leader. I became the new SC SNL and Eileen the new Regional Nurse Leader (RNL). Technically, I was supposed to orient Eileen, however, the orientation went the other way most of the time. Eileen knew more about Red Cross than anyone I knew at the time. Eileen was determined to teach me as much of what she knew as I could absorb, which was never as much as either of us wanted. Eileen reeled off names and positions so quickly I could never write complete notes nor remember all she told me.

As time went on, I realized that Eileen was a true gift to the Red Cross who volunteered more hours per week than most people work in their full time jobs. As a retired Lt. Col. in the USAF Reserves, Eileen continued to serve those who served this country in the military. She volunteered at the Charleston VA hospital weekly, drawing blood. She worked in multiple capacities for Service to the Armed Forces (SAF), including managing SAF and as an International Services volunteer until a staff person was hired. She then spent many hours weekly as a caseworker, handling many emergency communications between military personnel, doctors and family members at home. Eileen was determined to get military personnel home in time to say goodbye rather than to attend funerals, even if it meant working all hours of the day and night. She traveled the country to teach other Red Cross volunteers to serve the military by reconnecting and supporting families during and after deployments. She also taught classes about the Geneva Convention.

When Charleston suffered the mass shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2015, not only was Eileen on the phones to recruit Red Cross volunteers, she was on the phones checking on volunteers who had been handing out water bottles to those gathered outside in the hot, humid Charleston weather. She called to see how volunteers were doing in their own battles against dehydration and with possible emotional reactions.

When another group in which I am involved became aware of the need for a guardian for an incapacitated veteran in Charleston, I called Eileen. She gave me several suggestions, including how to contact the Medical Foster Home Program at the VA hospital. That vet, who has dementia and no family, is now happy in a foster home where he hopes to live for the rest of his life. Thank you, Eileen.

Eileen was always very clear on scope of practice, and who needed to do what in Red Cross nursing. She encouraged others, recruited all the time and gave out cool penlight pens to nurses. Her
dedication to the highest standards was always obvious as she encouraged others to function in the same manner and to solve problems when they occurred.

Eileen received several awards during the years I knew her. In March of 2016, she went to Washington, D.C. to accept the civilian version of the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Citizen Honors Award. Several years ago, she won a new car in a contest sponsored by a Charleston television station for nominees who had served veterans. She immediately donated the car she had been driving to her local Red Cross chapter.

When Eileen had a recurrence of mouth cancer in 2015, she called me to let me know surgery was scheduled, and it might slow her down for a bit. I knew that the surgery was complicated with a long recovery and offered a medical leave from her position. She would not hear of it. Throughout over a year of ups and downs, Eileen continued to work as the RNL for the Palmetto SC Region. When she could not speak or her speech could not be understood, she concentrated on communicating via her laptop. She listened on conference calls and asked questions later via email.

I saw Eileen for the last time several weeks before she died at the VA hospital in Charleston. Her trach and jaw pain prevented her from speaking, but she was busy writing instructions for a former USAF nurse with whom she had served in Somalia, so that the nurse could get official combat recognition. A veteran who had flown with WWII vets on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. to visit the National WWII Memorial stopped in to see Eileen. I discovered that Eileen had accompanied and cared for veterans on the first four bus trips taken from SC before the flights began. When the others had gone and it was my turn, she wrote instructions for me and described the details of her upcoming memorial service. Eileen was always taking care of business. She never stopped being a nurse and never stopped trying to help others. I will miss her greatly.

Debra Exendine Williams, Red Cross Road Warrior October 17, 1953 – November 23, 2016

Debra Jo (Exendine) Williams, you are missed.

The summary of living a life is certainly not a resume or CV, and Debra’s living of life for God, family, and her passion to the American Red Cross is so much bigger than any list of static accomplishments. Yes, she completed her BA in History and Minor in Bible from Oklahoma Christian University, her BS in Nursing from Texas Women’s University and her Masters in Nursing from St. Louis University. She sadly left her husband, David Williams and daughters, Amanda Grandlienard and Meredith Williams, and grandchildren Jordan, Caleb and Carter. Debra was an active member of the Delaware Nation of Native American Indians. She was
deeply committed to and a devoted, full-time volunteer for the American Red Cross.

What I will personally remember Debra for, though, was her amazing penchant to be there. This ability is most likely related to her psychiatric nursing career but mostly connected to her heart capacity. She was there at the very beginning of my time as chief nurse, when I attended my very first division conference to figure it all out. Debra had it figured out and after I saw her understanding, I never went very long without a call into or visit with my mentor and helper of strength in a big and complex organization.

Debra’s Red Cross journey started in the late 1970’s as a nursing student teaching Family Caregiving classes to community members with homebound loved ones. Then Debra went on and away from the organization working as a psychiatric nurse and caring for her family for a couple of decades. Not unlike many others exposed to the Red Cross as nursing students, the pull of her previous Red Cross experience and the reality of older children eventually returned her to intermittent volunteerism. She served as a mental health and nursing professional for her Greater Houston Area Chapter responding to local and multi-family fires. After additional training, she started deploying to national disasters. She was living in Wilmington, Delaware, on September 11, 2001. That day Debra Williams found herself sitting with her own and neighbor children with working parents in NYC after an early school dismissal. They watched the montage of the planes crashing into the New York World Trade Center buildings, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania countryside.

That September 11th evening, Debra sent an email message to the Delmarva Red Cross Chapter Chief Executive Officer that would set her Red Cross work for the next decade. No longer would her volunteerism be episodic with the Red Cross: she would become a full-time lifer. The greatest immediate need was preparation of a cadre of trained disaster health responders and Debra would end up training over 100 health professionals who would deploy to New York. She then was assigned to manage the Integrated Care Teams (ICT) that visited the 200 Delaware families directly affected by the disaster, assisting the many spouses and children of those who died. Her background as a psychiatric provider helped her to connect with the families as well as helping the Red Cross workers she was directing.

Debra and her family moved once again for David’s job in 2003 to Texas where Debra was asked to serve as the Texas State Nurse Liaison. In this position she was responsible for helping the 25 Texas chapters to recruit and retain health professionals and build community partnerships to prepare for and respond to disasters and assist with other health initiatives. During this time, she continued to respond to local and national disasters.

Debra became a State Nurse Liaison Advisor, supporting and directing the State Nurse Liaisons in five states actively supporting the State Nurse Liaisons and State Mental Health Liaisons. Additionally, all her chapters had support for the Chapter Health Reviewer Initiative. Debra also partnered with another Division Advisor during these years to support programs and policies that helped promote the State Nurse Liaison Network nationally. She also continued to personally respond to disasters. In 2005, Debra responded to Hurricanes Rita and Katrina in senior leadership positions. She collaborated extensively with the University of Texas and public health departments as disaster clients were in housed in mega-shelters (1,000 people or more) and in additional smaller shelters. She also assured those in the community were receiving Red Cross services.

In 2008, Debra became the Health Services Manager and the Staff Health Manager in Houston, Texas during Hurricane Ike and worked on that operation for seven weeks. There was one mega-shelter of 2,000 people, plus, over 20 additional shelters in the jurisdiction. Debra had developed excellent relationships with the local, regional, and state public health departments, as
As her health worsened during the last decade, it never affected Debra’s deep care for the mission of the Red Cross. She continued to work without fail to both bring relief to victims of major disasters as well as to train, advocate for, and develop a strong group of health professional volunteers to expand the capacity to deliver all Red Cross services.

The Lenni-Lenape Grandfathers of the Delaware Nation believed that the starry cluster called the Milky Way was the path to heaven. I have no doubt that there was a Debra dust trail of stars that aligned with that path last November on the day before Thanksgiving.

Memory from Donna Dorsey:
I first met Debra when she was living in Delaware. We were having a nursing meeting in Baltimore and she had heard about it. She drove an hour to join us because she was volunteering at the Red Cross in Delaware and was the only nurse. I remember her laughing as she told me she had no nurses in Delaware, but that she would find them. She came to all our meetings to share and learn about what was going on, not only in Disaster Nursing, but also about all the ways to involve nurses. She was a great nurse leader at the Delaware chapter but soon left us to move to Oklahoma. She clearly left her mark. What I will remember most about my interactions with Debra is her sense of humor and how she made me laugh, even in the toughest times. I was blessed to have her as a friend, who was always available to help me when needed.

Memory from Linda MacIntyre:
Debra Williams is dearly missed. I met Debra when I became National Chairperson of Nursing and Debra shared valuable advice, support and her inimitable sense of humor. Debra was passionate in her advocacy for clients. Her heart was open and she shared her expertise with compassion and humility. She provided mentoring with a down-to-earth approach that inspired volunteers to become more deeply engaged. No matter how serious the topic of discussion, Debra and I shared much laughter. Debra touched the lives of many people and I’m fortunate to be one among them.

Memory from Eleanor Guzik:
How to describe a Debra Williams? Joyful Caring Sharing Tenacious Knowledgeable Coach Mentor Friend Roomie. During my early days of Red Cross Nursing Leadership, Debra was the beacon of HELP, the go-to person, the friendly ear. Not only did she listen, she came up with the answer. And, yes, she was my one-time roomie. I worked with Debra on many projects over the years and was enriched by them all. Her absence is and will be noted. Her influence will continue.
Nurse-Led Campaign to Help Save Children’s Lives: Give to the Measles and Rubella Initiative Today

The American Red Cross National Nursing Committee (NNC) has committed to garnering support for the American Red Cross Measles and Rubella Initiative with a goal of raising $50,000 in the next year to help eradicate measles by the year 2020.

What is the Measles and Rubella Initiative? It was created in 2001 by the American Red Cross, United Nations Foundation, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF and World Health Organization to help control the spread of measles and reduce measles-related deaths. Over the last 15 years, the American Red Cross and its Initiative partners have helped to vaccinate two billion children in 88 developing countries.

Because of these efforts, there has been a 79% decrease in deaths from measles. Nevertheless, 315 children die daily from measles complications. The goal is to eradicate measles in the world by 2020. It costs under $2 to vaccinate a child against measles and rubella in low-income countries.

Nurses give their time every day as Red Cross staff and volunteers, helping children and adults throughout the US and the world. Help the NNC demonstrate that nurses also put their finances where their ideals and values are, by supporting this nurse-led campaign. Make a contribution to the Measles and Rubella Initiative today by going to https://www.crowdrise.com/nurses-working-together-to-stop-measles-and-rubella and clicking on “Donate”. As of mid-March, $3,500 has been collected toward the $50,000 goal. We thank the National Black Nurses Association for their donation of $2000!

Thinking About Making a Gift Through Your Will? Candace Roosevelt, MAN, MBA

Remembering the American Red Cross in your will is a wonderful way for you to make a lasting gift. Large or small, your bequest will make an important contribution to our long-term strength and our ability to carry on with our activities.

There are several ways that you can define the amount of your charitable gift to the Red Cross. You also have several options for telling the Red Cross how we may use your bequest, once we receive it.

That is why it is very important that your bequest be accurately and clearly described in your estate plan so that we can carry out your wishes as you intended. We are pleased to consult with you regarding the terms of your bequest to make sure that we will be able to carry out your intentions. We are happy to provide you with sample bequest language to assist you and your attorney.

Help us get in touch with and recognize other current and former Red Cross Nurses! Please send the email, phone, and address of your friends and colleagues to us at RedCrossNurse@redcross.org. Share this newsletter via email, Facebook, Twitter and your preferred social media. Link to http://www.redcross.org/support/get-involved/heritage-program and click on the “Nursing Matters – Past and Present” link.

Thank you!