Man makes personal sacrifice to help

Things have come full circle for Red Crosser Joaquin Lemus. A phlebotomist since 2010, Joaquin recently began a new position as a Red Cross fleet coordinator, helping maintain the organization’s Boise-area vehicles and facilities. He was enjoying this new role, but not long after he started that position, the omicron variant began its steady march across the country, making it much more difficult for the Red Cross to collect lifesaving blood.

Blood drives were being canceled and the nationwide blood inventory was at its lowest point in a decade. Joaquin knew he needed to do something to help.

So with little hesitation, he raised his hand to move back into his old position for a month or so and help his biomed teammates collect the blood products that hospitals desperately needed.

For Joaquin, blood collection is extremely important after two close family members required blood. “I thought it was going to be like $100 or $200 a unit,” he said. “Almost a $1,000 a month.”

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SEE GOING BACK, PAGE 2

Schoolkids raise funds for fire victims

In December, when Great Falls sixth-grader Katelyn Nix heard about the Gibson Flats fire that burned south of town, she knew she wanted to do something to help the families who had lost their homes. “I love to give back to others, and I love to see how that makes them feel,” the 12-year-old said.

She thought about it all day at school, and that afternoon as she road home with her friend Sophia Nelson, she was inspired to act. "I was talking with our principal, and the Red Cross is the first thing that comes to mind that can spread the money and help people," Katelyn said.

And she’s grateful to everyone who gave them support along the way. "I’m very happy that everything worked out," she said. "I’m very appreciative of everyone who helped out and helped make this what it could be."
Welcome our new employees

We are excited to announce a couple of new hires in our region. Courtney Wilson is the new executive admin for our region and is based in the Boise area. With a strong desire to help others, Courtney comes to the American Red Cross after six years of working as an administrative assistant in higher education.

In her free time, she enjoys going on adventures with her husband and daughter, exploring the great Idaho outdoors, reading, dancing and writing. Courtney replaces Angela James, who has retired after almost nine years with the Red Cross. Angela will remain as a volunteer helping with the inventorying of mission cards and appointment assistance cards.

Rick Baker has joined the operations team and is working out of our Great Falls office. Rick will be responsible for our fleet and facilities in Great Falls, Helena and Bozeman. He served in the military for 22 years and has extensive experience in fleet, security and facility management.

He enjoys the outdoors and loves to fish and hike. Welcome, Courtney and Rick. Angela, thank you for your service.

Spots open on disaster response teams

Learn how to be the Red Cross in your community by volunteering as part of a disaster team. Also, take the survey and let us know how you want to receive breaking Red Cross news, and learn how you can help us tell our stories online.

POSITIVE OF THE MONTH. Do you want to be part of a team assisting those recovering from disaster events? If so, we can put you to work.

Title: Disaster Action Team Volunteer

Location: Anywhere in Greater Idaho, Montana, and East Oregon.

Tasks: As a disaster action team volunteer, you can be a source of refuge and support when it’s needed most. Fires and storms are unexpected, but you can get trained today to be ready to help in an emergency. Join your local disaster action team today and help your neighbors when they need it most.

Time commitment: Less than 5 hours per week pending unforeseen disasters.

Deadline: Applications are accepted at IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or by phone/text at 406-493-8778 for more information.

RED CROSS IN THE NEWS. Red Cross of Idaho and Montana CEO Courtney Wilson is participating in Boise State Public Radio’s “Questions for the Week.” They brought in a donation were Students at Vaughn Public Schools also cared for their pets. Students at Vaughn Public Schools also did their part to help families impacted by the Gibson Fails fire with a fundraiser of their own. Students who brought in a donation were allowed to wear their hats at school. Their efforts tallied more than $120 for Red Cross relief efforts.

Great Falls middle school student sent assistance / Page 1

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meaning to my job.”

Joaquin’s mother also required blood transfusions for an illness. “She is A-OK now,” he said. “Working in collections was a job when I started. Now it is more of a calling. It is so rewarding.”

Now the father of two, Joaquin originally came to the Red Cross in 2010 after working at Micron Technology, where many of his friends and co-workers had donated blood. Things came full circle for him there as well when he was told he could drive shortly after he became a phlebotomist. “I even stuck my old engineering buddy there, then two more at Micron,” he said.

Since this winter’s blood crisis, the Idaho Red Cross has been able to hire and train several new phlebotomists, and the COVID surge has slowed dramatically. After personally helping collect 200 units of lifesaving blood during his temporary stint with the collections team, Joaquin has returned changes and updates with you in the ways – and the pace – that you prefer.

If so, we can put you to work.

As part of the 12 Days of Giving Campaign in December, Gov. Gianforte encouraged Montanans to roll up their sleeves and donate lifesaving blood. And the governor proclaimed January as National Blood Donor Month and also visited our shelters during wildfire season to thank our volunteers.

This all led to positive media coverage in communities big and small across the state.

TALK TO US. War, COVID-19… we know the world is constantly changing right now, and we want to make sure we are communicating these

RED CROSS NEWS & HAPPENINGS

Black History Museum Director Phillip Thompson when they discussed the blood shortage, our partnership with the Black History Museum and the need for blood donors from all ethnic groups. Great coverage on an important topic. Listen to the entire interview here.

In Montana, Executive Director Diane Wright has cultivated a strong partnership with Gov. Gianforte’s office and has paid big dividends. A few weeks ago, Gov. Gianforte issued a proclamation declaring March as Red Cross Month in Montana. As part of the governor’s office 12 Days of Giving Campaign in December, Gov. Gianforte encouraged Montanans to roll up their sleeves and donate lifesaving blood. And the governor proclaimed January as National Blood Donor Month and also visited our shelters during wildfire season to thank our volunteers.

As a volunteer, you can be a source of refuge and support when it’s needed most. Fires and storms are unexpected, but you can get trained today to be ready to help in an emergency. Join your local disaster action team today and help your neighbors when they need it most.

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RED CROSS IN THE NEWS. Red Cross of Idaho and Montana CEO Nicole Sirak Irwin recently appeared on Boise State Public Radio with Idaho Vaughn students also send money for fire victims

Students at Vaughn Public Schools also did their part to help families impacted by the Gibson Fails fire with a fundraiser of their own. Students who brought in a donation were allowed to wear their hats at school. Their efforts tallied more than $120 for Red Cross relief efforts.

KETCHUP WITH FRIENDS. Please join fellow volunteers at our social time, Tuesday, April 15, from 7:30 - 8 p.m. One winner will receive a prize.

Click here to join the meeting.

If you join and are having trouble getting access, please send a message to Nic.Gilberti@RedCross.org and we will see what we can do to help. Hope to see you all there!

Going back: ‘Strong team player’ praised

His hard work is an inspiration to everyone around him.

— Dawn Brossart, regional chief operating officer

His flexibility and commitment to helping others hasn’t gone unnoticed. “Joaquin’s willingness to assist with collecting lifesaving blood is a testa- tion to his values,” said Dawn Brossart, regional chief operating officer.

“Once again he went above and beyond the call of duty and demon- strated what a strong team player he is. His hard work is an inspiration to everyone around him.”

— Amy Joyner

Red Cross writing team volunteer