

# RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



## ON THE HORIZON

- February – [Black History Month](#)
- Feb. 13 – Phlebotomist Recognition Week begins
- Feb. 14 – Valentine’s Day
- Feb. 17 – [National Caregivers Day](#)
- Feb. 20 – President’s Day
- March – [Red Cross Month](#)



# 28

Disaster responses in January. Clients helped: 93



## MILESTONES

JO ERICKSEN, 10 years

YOENG BEEM, 5 years

SHERRY ISRAEL, 5 years

## VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Celebrating your Red Cross anniversary this quarter? If so, then watch for a Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. It will arrive via email with the subject line “We need your feedback” and helps us understand what we are doing well and where we can improve.



## IN MEMORIAM

Longtime Red Cross volunteer **Dave Tish** of Greenleaf, Idaho, passed away in January. Dave wore many Red Cross hats, including as a Service to the Armed Forces volunteer, transportation specialist and longtime blood donor. Services will be held Feb. 16 at 10:30 a.m. at Valley Shepherd Church of the Nazarene in Meridian. Read more about Dave and his service [here](#).



When he was a baby, Colton Phillips (left) was diagnosed with brain cancer and needed countless blood transfusions during the surgery and treatments that followed. Now 30 years old, Colton is seen here with his father Jim, brother Austin and mother Gale. The family is planning a blood drive on Feb. 21 to raise awareness of the importance and impact of blood donation.

# Paying back the gift of life

*30 years ago, their baby needed lifesaving blood. Now, Idaho family is inspiring others to give*

Thirty years ago, Gale and Jim Phillips’ infant son Colton was in an Oakland hospital fighting for his life. Now, three decades and countless blood transfusions later, Colton is doing well, and his parents are organizing a Red Cross blood drive in February in Idaho City to raise awareness of the profound impact blood donors have on families like theirs.

“We just felt like it was so important to give the community the opportunity to save a life,” she said.

A couple weeks after he was born, Colton became very sick, and Gale and Jim, who were living in Eureka, Calif., at the time, took him to a nearby hospital. Initially, doctors diag-

nosed him with hydrocephalus, which causes fluid buildup in the brain and excessive pressure. The Phillips were told a shunt would solve the problem.

But four weeks later Colton’s condition worsened, and he was life flighted to the Oakland Children’s Hospital. Within minutes of his arrival, an MRI revealed Colton had brain cancer. A 12-hour brain surgery followed.

“It was terrifying,” Gale said.

During that time, Colton’s entire blood supply had to be replaced three times.

“So at a very young age – my husband and I were 21 – we realized how important it was that people donated blood because without that our baby wouldn’t have made it,” she said.

During the next year, Colton was in and out of the Oakland hospital as he underwent chemotherapy and continued to receive blood transfusions. Things seemed to be heading in the right direction, but then doctors discovered cancer cells in his back and saw that his main

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## Red Cross gives partners a boost

As Red Cross prepared for a renovation of its Great Falls Blood Donation Center and offices, local nonprofits got a helping hand along the way.

During the heart of the COVID pandemic, Red Cross built up a large stock of sanitation supplies like wipes, bleach and hand sanitizer, supplies that didn’t have a home as they cleaned out their facilities in anticipation of the remodel. That’s when Great Falls fleet

and maintenance tech Rick Baker and volunteer Angela James reached out to the Maclean-Animal Adoption Center and the Great Falls Animal Shelter to see if they could put these supplies to good use. Both facilities raised their hands.



Baker

“They said they could use

them to clean out their kennels,” Rick said. “They were very, very appreciative.”

Red Cross also had office furniture that needed to be removed, and Habitat for Humanity was the perfect fit. District Manager Carmen Madsen helped make that happen.

“This was a great example of staff going above and beyond and caring about the community,” said Wendy McGrew, the regional chief operating officer.

# Volunteers receive lifetime awards

We are thrilled to announce that volunteers Vicky Johns, Scott Fairfield and Teresa Browning were recently selected as winners of the U.S. Presidential Lifetime Award for their tremendous contributions to the Red Cross.

Vicky, who has been with the organization for a decade, has tallied more than 4,110 hours and wears many Red Cross hats including as a Disaster Action Team coordinator, a regional recovery program lead and Service to the Armed Forces event support volunteer. She lives in Meridian, Idaho. Read more about Vicky's amazing work here <https://rdcss.org/3WA0NrM>.

Scott, who lives in Eureka, Mont., has been with the Red Cross for five years and has logged more than 4,860 hours. A Disaster Action Team coordinator, duty officer and Pillowcase presenter, Scott manages to cover multiple counties despite having a small team. Read more about Scott's accomplishments here <https://rdcss.org/40dheNV>.

Teresa has been with Red Cross for four years and has already volunteered more than 5,860 hours. She lives in Idaho Falls and serves as a Disaster



Action Team supervisor, duty officer and emergency response vehicle driver among her many responsibilities.

All three will receive a commemorative coin, a certificate signed by the president and a thank-you letter from the White House.

Vicky Johns and Kathy Mellinger were also nominated for the American Red Cross Presidential Award for Excellence.

This award is presented to Red Cross employees and volunteers who demonstrate superior job performance. A Red Crosser of six years who lives in the Dillon, Mont., area, Kathy serves as a duty officer, a Disaster Action Team supervisor and an information and planning regional program lead. Read more about Kathy here <https://rdcss.org/3iZW6cY>.

Congrats again to all of our winners and nominees.

**POSITION OF THE MONTH:** Did you know the Red Cross has a variety of virtual volunteer opportunities?

These positions range from educational outreach to taking the initial call for assisting the client's immediate needs. Below are two showcased options. For a full listing, visit [www.redcross.org/volunteer](http://www.redcross.org/volunteer) and search "virtual"

**LOCATION:** From the comfort of your own home!

**Service to the Armed Forces - Hero Care Caseworker:** Are you ready to support those who serve our country? The American Red Cross stands by these heroes and their families from the day they enlist throughout their military careers and beyond.

**Disaster Action Team Duty Officer:** Do you want to coordinate assistance during times of disaster? Duty officer volunteers play a key role in disaster response and client service delivery.

Are you or someone you know a great fit? Contact Sidney at [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org) or by phone/text at 425-238-3349 for more information.

# Board blood drive a success

A Missoula blood drive organized by the Montana Red Cross Board of Directors brought in 30 units of lifesaving blood, including five power red donations.

Board chairman Craig Stahlberg, board member and former board chair Tom Wozniak and board member David Roberts were among those donating.

"The board rallied their friends and co-workers to make this drive a success," said Montana Red Cross Executive Director Diane Wright, who also donated at the drive. "I am grateful for their leadership and commitment to the mission of the American Red Cross."

The annual drive takes place during National Blood Donor Month in January, a great opportunity to recognize generous blood donors and encourage others to raise their hands, roll up their sleeves and donate the vital blood so many families depend on.

Last year's board drive saw 31 donors come through the door including nine first-time donors.

To learn more about blood donation in Montana including how you can support our biomed expansion campaign, visit [redcross.org/](http://redcross.org/)



**Montana board members Craig Stahlberg (top) and Tom Wozniak (left) came out to donate blood during the board's annual blood drive in Missoula during National Blood Donor Month. Also pictured is phlebotomist Megan Jones.**

# Gift: Family thankful for generous donors

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tumor was growing. Meningitis followed, and Jim and Gale made the difficult decision to stop treatment and bring Colton home so he could be more comfortable. Against all odds, Colton began to recover.

Now age 30, Colton deals with epilepsy and other challenges related to his illness but is doing well and works a couple of hours each week at the local library. He plans to attend the family's Red Cross blood drive Feb. 21 at the Christian Center in Idaho City.

"He wants to give back to the world that gave him his life," Gale said. "Colton is in awe that we live in a world where we're able to do this kind of



**Gale and Jim Phillips with Colton when he was a baby.**

stuff."

Gale and Jim, who have lived in Idaho City for the past five years after 25 years in the Boise valley, are both blood donors, though Gale said she was

a bit hesitant at first.

"I'm scared of needles so I'm just surprised at how easy and how comfortable the (staff) makes you feel," she said. "The employees of the Red Cross are very understanding, compassionate and patient and they make a very uncomfortable thing comfortable."

The Phillips said they hope the upcoming blood drive will be the first of many they will help organize and will never forget the generosity and kindness of the blood donors who helped keep their son alive during their darkest days.

"We are so grateful that they were able to be an instrumental part of saving our son's life," Gale said. "Without the blood, the doctors and the nurses and the hospitals couldn't do it."