

# RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



## ON THE HORIZON

- **January** – National Blood Donor Month.
- **Jan. 15** – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **February** – Black History Month
- **February** – Cancer Prevention Month
- **Feb. 12** – Phlebotomist Recognition Week begins.
- **Feb. 14** – Valentine’s Day
- **Feb. 16** – National Caregivers Day



# 15

**Disaster responses** in December. **People helped: 52**



## MILESTONES

- DON NESBITT**, 15 years
- JENNIFER SONNICHSEN**, 15 years
- JOHN PERGOY**, 10 years
- KRISTEN INBODY**, 5 years
- DONNA EUBANK**, 5 years
- GEETAM BHARDWAJ**, 5 years
- SARAH ECKERT**, 5 years



## VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Celebrating your Red Cross anniversary this month? If so, watch for a Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. You will receive an email with the subject line “We need your feedback.” Completing this survey helps us understand where we can improve. You can share additional feedback anytime by emailing [IDMTE-OR.teamwork@redcross.org](mailto:IDMTE-OR.teamwork@redcross.org).



Montana Red Cross board member Denise Burk required several blood transfusions while undergoing treatment for breast cancer and is grateful for those who rolled up their sleeves.

# INSPIRED BY KINDNESS

*Serving as board member especially personal for Montana cancer survivor*

**F**or Denise Burk, serving as a Red Cross volunteer and board member is extremely personal. In 2021, the now-49-year-old Great Falls banking professional was diagnosed with breast cancer, which ultimately caused anemia and led her to require several blood transfusions.

“I am here today because some kind stranger, whom I will never meet, donated blood,” Denise said. “I am now in remission, have a surgery or two still ahead, but the hill to climb getting here was more than I would ever wish upon anyone.

“I don’t think people realize the enormity of what that blood in the bag means. You don’t know whose life you are going to save when giving blood, so if you have the capability of donating blood, please remember the (Red Cross).”

In 2021, Denise began chemotherapy and radiation treatments to fight breast cancer. These treatments eventually cured her cancer, but also caused her red blood-cell level to

become critically low. She was not surprised by this because as a young woman she experienced bouts of anemia.

“The chemo made me extremely sick,” she said. “But the doctor kept saying, ‘this will work.’ But it had the opposite effect for me because I became anemic.

“The oncologist looked right at me and said, ‘We have to get you blood, and now.’”

Denise received eight units of either whole blood or platelets over a span of a month and a half.

Near the end of her cancer journey, she was diagnosed with COVID pneumonia and received the final two units of blood for her anemia diagnosis while she was hospitalized fighting that severe respiratory illness.

“It was a harrowing year,” Denise recalled.

“I will most likely never be able to donate blood again, but my hope is that I can give back

in meaningful, heartfelt ways,” she added. She was a sporadic blood donor in her 20s, donating only when her anemia was under control.

One of the most notable ways she gives back now is by serving as a Montana Red Cross

“I don’t think people realize the enormity of what that blood in the bag means.

— Denise Burk, Montana Red Cross board member and blood recipient

SEE KINDNESS, PAGE 2

## Tribal partnerships build resiliency

Northern Cheyenne tribal communities are now better prepared for disasters after receiving supplies that will help them respond to emergencies and maintain communications, even during a power outage.

In December, Montana Red Cross delivered three portable generators, three highly durable laptops and three mobile WiFi hotspots to its tribal partners.

“These items will allow for consistent communication during and after an emergency

and allow our teams to communicate during search-and-rescue operations,” said Angel Lei, tribal disaster and emergency services coordinator. “These items guarantee that even if there is no power, the shelter and the Emergency Operations Center will always be powered. They will also help support building resiliency in the Northern Cheyenne community.”

Montana’s tribal nations often partner with the Red

SEE RESILIENCY, PAGE 2



Eric Allen delivers generators and laptops to Angel Lei and the Northern Cheyenne Nation.

# Recognition event coming soon

**RECOGNITION EVENT:** Our annual Volunteer Recognition Virtual event is Jan. 17 at 6 p.m. (MST). We hope you will be able to join us as we celebrate and recognize years of service milestones and celebrate our Chapter Excellence Award winners.

[Click here to join the meeting.](#)

**VOLUNTEER TOWNHALL:** For those who were unable to attend last month's volunteer townhall here's a link to the recording: <https://bit.ly/3TROTmN>.

**CARD INVENTORY:** The quarterly inventory of client assistance and mission cards is underway with the reporting window open Jan. 1-15. Reporting cards in hand ASAP is much appreciated.

By now you should have received an email with the link to the easy online form (<https://forms.office.com/r/zgdAN0x0Wk>) and helpful FAQs.

If you have problems reporting, contact [angela.james2@redcross.org](mailto:angela.james2@redcross.org). To successfully report, you will need

## IN THE KNOW



RED CROSS NEWS & HAPPENINGS

the following information on the envelopes containing cards: batch number, envelope number and the last four digits of the proxy number.

**ACTIVE ATTACKER TRAINING:** Please save the date for an Active Attacker training class from 2-4:30 p.m. (MST) on Feb. 6.

Taught by local law enforcement, this class is designed to teach a proactive approach in the event of an active shooter or violent intrusion. Topics include the history and prevalence of active attack events, civilian response options, medical issues and considerations.

[Click here to join the meeting.](#)

**POSITION OF THE MONTH:** Are you passionate about promoting volunteer service? We are looking for recruitment volunteers to help develop and

complete recruitment activities such as distributing flyers, conducting research for prospective community partners and posting opportunities to volunteer sites (such as VolunteerMatch, UnitedWay, JustServe, etc.). This position helps Red Cross volunteers pursue their passion by connecting them to opportunities where they can make a difference.

**Location:** Virtual and in-person projects available. Recruitment volunteers are needed region-wide throughout Idaho, Montana, and East Oregon.

**Time commitment:** Flexible! Minimum of 2 hours per month requested.

Contact [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org) or call 208-616-0358.

**LET'S TALK:** Southwestern Montana Disaster Program Manager Rob Edwards is encouraging volunteers to join him for a cup of coffee and a snack every Thursday at our Missoula Donor Center, 2401 N. Reserve St.

Feel free to drop in, say hi and connect any time from 9 a.m-1 p.m.

# Spreading cheer, hope at the Capitol

The Montana State Capitol shines brightly during the holiday season. On display just down from the governor's office stands a giant Christmas tree that stops all who stroll past.

But the tree isn't the only thing standing tall and proud this month. Stephen Baiamonte has been the general services division administrator and security director at the Capitol for nearly a decade. He's the man behind the mission to spread holiday cheer at the Capitol.

But his efforts don't stop there. Stephen's work to bring holiday happiness and hope has bled into another cause — saving lives.

December's Red Cross Capitol blood drive marked the 78th time the Helena resident dropped himself into the donor chair. Stephen has always known about the importance of donating blood. His father was a 10-gallon donor with the Red Cross, something he says he ad-



mired. Then, at 17 years old, an opportunity to begin his own donor journey came from campus.

"There was a blood drive at my high school, so I was just excited that I was actually old enough to do it and just kept going from there," the longtime donor said.

He now donates frequently at Helena drives and even gives blood back home

where it all started in San Diego.

Stephen believes donating blood is the right thing to do. He encourages others to think about giving something that means something by getting involved this holiday and year-round.

"Sign up for a blood drive, and if you're eligible, go through the process. It's worthwhile," he said.

— *Story by Keeley Van Middendorp*

# Kindness: Volunteering a priority

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board member.

It's a role that fits nicely with her professional and volunteer endeavors. This year marks Denise's 10<sup>th</sup> with US Bank.

In addition to joining the Red Cross board, Denise has a long history of volunteerism, having served as the vice president of the Great Falls Tourism District, the Montana Hotel Association sales and marketing board of directors, the Great Falls YWCA board and worked hand-in-hand with the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce.

"Since my breast cancer sickness, I have spent a limited amount of volunteer time in the public, but I do spend a good number of volunteer hours every month working with the American Red Cross," she explained.

After the chemotherapy and blood infusions, Denise lost 80 pounds and still had to undergo radiation treatments. Finally, in February 2022, her doctor announced that her cancer was officially in remission.

Today, she focuses on giving back to the community that helped her through her cancer success story.

"There are things in this community

you can do to help. Across the state, the Red Cross has a nice footprint we can use to help other communities, as well," she added.

"As people living in our community, we need to make sure we are giving our time and energy in ways outside of how we are already spending our time."

She likens her perspective to that of the childhood favorite, Mr. Rogers.

"I want to know I am being that helper person," she said. "Mr. Rogers always said to look for the helpers; 'they are always there.'"

— *Story by writing team volunteer Amy Joyner*

# Resiliency: Portable generators, laptops

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Cross during disasters such as wildfires and flooding to make sure families' most immediate needs like food and shelter are met.

"We are honored to deliver these

emergency supplies to our tribal partners," said Eric Allen, Red Cross disaster program manager for Eastern Montana. "In addition to these generators and laptops, funding from a generous supporter over the past few years has helped us deliver emergency shelter

trailers and supplies to the Northern Cheyenne, Blackfoot and Crow nations and to the Fort Belknap Reservation. Disaster response is a statewide effort, and partnerships like these make our communities better prepared and more resilient."