Sally Ladd and her family in Philipsburg, Mont., listen to Red Crossers Shellie Creveling, left, and Lori Fons, right, who arrived at their home to install a free smoke alarm.

Free smoke alarms ensuring safety

Sally Ladd and her family were all smiles recently when a Red Cross team arrived at her door offering to install free smoke alarms.

"Oh my gosh, it was great," the mother of three said.

The Philipsburg, Mont., family had a few alarms already, but not necessarily installed in the right places, and a small cooking fire a couple of years ago was a reminder of just how quickly a fire can grow.

"As a mom I feel very moved that you would do something like this," she said. "I'm grateful for having that feeling of greater safety for me and my family."

More than 150 families across Montana and Idaho are safer from home fires thanks to communitywide smoke alarm installation events like the one in Philipsburg. As part of the national Sound the Alarm campaign, the Red Cross of Idaho and Montana rallied volunteers, local fire departments and community and tribal partners to come together to help keep their friends, families and neighbors safe from the nation’s most common disaster – home fires.

On average, Red Cross responds to a home fire every day in Idaho and Montana. Besides Philipsburg, teams also installed alarms in Drummond, Hall and Butte in Montana and in Gooding and Parma in Idaho. Combined, these volunteers installed more than 370 free alarms.

"There were several homes that didn’t have any alarms, so they were very appreciative," said Red Cross volunteer Dennis Becker, who helped out in Gooding, his first Sound the Alarm event.

The remembered comfort of a beloved blanket, a gift from the Red Cross during a time of crisis many years ago, inspired a generous gift decades later.

"I was just a mess," Chris said. "It was deep in the fall, and I was out there completely gutted."

"I was so proud of that blanket, and it was deep in the fall, and I was out there completely gutted," Chris said.

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Volunteer officer promoted

Please join us in congratulating Wendy McGrew, who has transitioned into the role of regional chief operating officer. Wendy has been part of the Idaho Montana region staff since 2015 as the regional volunteer services officer and has managed a team that is responsible for recruitment, engagement and volunteer relations.

Prior to her staff position, Wendy was an active Disaster Cycle Services volunteer and has managed a team that is responsible for recruitment, engagement and volunteer relations.

She deployed numerous times and specialized in staff services, community partnerships and staff relations. Her service included multiple hurricane operations and Superstorm Sandy.

Wendy is a graduate of Georgia State University with a Master of Science in Psychology and a Master of Business Administration in organizational management. She is also a Certified Volunteer Administrator and a Certified Associate of Project Management.

Wendy and her husband, John, live in Missoula. John is a fiscal review volunteer in Disaster Cycle Services and a communications lead for the Red Cross. She is replacing Dawn Brossart, who is leaving for a well deserved post-pandemic rest.

Preparation is under way for an anticipated surge in need, and Red Cross is recruiting volunteers to work in shelter service. Check into these opportunities. Also, don’t miss Ketchup With Friends, and be sure to respond to the volunteer communication survey.

Read on!

In The Know

This month, we’re recognizing two of our top performers: Eric Horton and Carmen Madsen.

Two top performers bring credit to region

We would like to congratulate two of our Idaho and Montana biomed leaders, Eric Horton and Carmen Madsen.

In April, Carmen, our donor recruitment district manager based in Great Falls, Mont., and Eric Horton, our regional donor services executive based in Boise, were recognized at the American Red Cross National Headquarters in Washington, D.C., as two of 20 recipients of Biomedical Services Employee Excellence Awards for their stellar work and accomplishments over the past year.

The winners were selected by the biomedical senior executive committee after being recommended by their local committee.

The Idaho and Montana region continues to shine as one of the top biomed performers in the country, ranking at the top or near the top in several categories including customer service, operational efficiency and amount of lifesaving blood products collected toward goal.

Eric and Carmen play a huge role in that success. Congratulations again to Eric and Carmen and our whole team!
PASS THE WORD

Idaho

If you know someone in Idaho who needs smoke alarms, please encourage them to visit SoundTheAlarm.org/Idaho or call 800-853-2570, option 1, to schedule an appointment.

Montana

In Montana, visit SoundTheAlarm.org/Montana or call 800-272-6668.

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Alarm event. “Most of the homes we went to were outside of the city limits so it was quite a ways from where the fire department was, so having smoke alarms was something they really appreciated.” The Red Cross partnered with the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Nation and the local fire department to install close to 50 free alarms in more than 20 Busby homes in southeastern Montana. Red Cross teams also visited schools in Philipsburg and Drummond in southwest Montana, teaching 200 students how to be prepared in case of an emergency like a fire. They also delivered emergency readiness information to local groups like the Rotary Club.

“When the fire alarm goes off get low and go,” 7-year-old Aida Ladd said, describing one of the important tips she learned from the Red Cross presenters.

Sally Ladd said her kids were super excited to share what they learned with the rest of the family.

“It’s wonderful to have a couple of schoolchildren who came home so jazzed, and they have all these phrases about what to do now if a fire comes,” Sally Ladd said. “I just want to say thank you.”

But the work doesn’t stop here. The Red Cross will continue to collaborate with community partners and its volunteers to install more alarms and share fire safety information as requests come in. They are also partnering with the Nez Perce in northern Idaho to install alarms there.

Nationally, more than 1,200 lives have been saved by alarms installed during Red Cross home fire safety events. That includes a family in Jerome, Idaho, who escaped their home safely during a 2016 fire just a few months after Red Cross installed free alarms.

Becker said it feels good to know they’re making a difference.

“There’s so much bad stuff that’s always going on it’s nice to be able to help people out to do what we can and do good in today’s world,” he said.

— Matt Ochsner
Preventive program spans region

Smoke alarm events occurred recently in several corners of Montana and Idaho. We appreciate the volunteers who made it happen, and the families who invited us into their homes. FROM TOP LEFT: The Northern Cheyenne fire department helped open doors in Busby, Mont.; Diane Wright, Montana Red Cross executive director, and Montana Red Cross board chairman Craig Stahlberg help in Granite County; and volunteer Jennell Van Dyke delivers home fire safety information during a stop in Busby. BOTTOM LEFT: Volunteer Liz Bolts helps out in Parma, Idaho. BOTTOM RIGHT: Keith Creveling installs an alarm in Granite County. (See full story, photos on pages 1 and 3.)