

RED ALERTS!

Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed

ON THE HORIZON

■ October –
[National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#)

■ October –
[Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)

■ Oct. 8 – [Fire Prevention Week begins](#)

■ Oct. 9 – Indigenous Peoples’ Day

■ Oct. 10 – [World Mental Health Day](#)

■ Oct. 31 – Halloween

■ Nov. 5 – Daylight Savings Time ends

■ Nov. 7 – Election Day

■ Nov. 11 – Veterans Day

■ Nov. 13 – [World Kindness Day](#)

■ Nov. 23 – Thanksgiving

13
Disaster responses in September.
Clients helped: 46

MILESTONES

AL CROTHERS,
5 years

TONIA PETERSON
5 years

JENNIFER BUCHANAN, 5 years

RANDY WILLIAMS, 5 years

CARMEN HAYDEN, 5 years

RITA TUCKER, 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.

Michael Graham, who worked for years as a skydiving instructor, made more than 17,000 jumps. In 1995, Michael was seriously injured during a jump and needed blood transfusions.

Skydiving into the donor’s bed

Serious crash inspires man to become lifelong Red Cross blood donor

Michael Graham had already made 1,725 successful skydives before the jump that would change his life forever and make him a lifelong Red Cross blood donor.

It was Halloween Day in 1995, and Michael was employed as a skydiving instructor in Virginia. He had made three or four jumps that morning with first-time students. Next up, a man with more experience who was working to get his skydiving license.

“This was going to be a fun jump,” said Michael, who now lives in Nampa, Idaho. “This guy knows what he’s doing and has really done well through the program. This was not a high-pressure jump.”

Michael, 28 at the time, had an idea. While the student would land in a wide-open area in the drop zone, Michael would do something special he was sure his trainee would never forget.

“There was a pond on the drop zone, and I thought, ‘Gosh, when I come in for a landing, I would speed up my landing, come across the pond and shoot a rooster

SEE SKYDIVE, PAGE 3

Michael Graham, who lives in Nampa, is a regular blood donor. “Because of the three pints I got in the hospital I really wanted to give back,” he said.

Michael Graham made 16,000 more jumps after breaking both femurs in a skydiving accident.

Girl Scouts create comfort kit bags

Montana families forced from their homes by disasters like fires or floods will get a little extra love sent their way thanks to the hard work of a Great Falls Girl Scout troop.

The scouts were looking for a volunteer project when Troop Leader Terri Plunkett suggested doing something that would help Montana Red Cross and those they serve. The group decided to make comfort kit bags that would hold hygiene items like shampoo, combs, a toothbrush and tooth paste

SEE SCOUTS, PAGE 2

Eloise, a Great Falls Girl Scout, shows some of the bags her troop made to hold Red Cross hygiene items.

Let’s talk Volunteer Connection

Learn about our upcoming Volunteer Connection open office hours and don’t forget to report your client assistance and mission cards, in this month’s In the Know.

VOLUNTEER CONNECTION: Do you have questions about Volunteer Connection? The Volunteer Services team will host Volunteer Connection: Open Office Hours two times per month.

Our October office hours will be:

- Thursday, Oct. 12, at 5 p.m. MST. [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Monday, Oct. 30, at noon MST. [Click here to join the meeting](#).

POSITION OF THE MONTH: Join our Disaster Health Services Volunteer Team — a virtual opportunity tailor-made for medical professionals who want to give back using their skills. When disaster strikes, be it home fires,



wildfires or flooding, our Disaster Health Services volunteers step in to provide essential health care support. This includes medication replacement, medical supplies assistance, health assessments, referrals for spiritual care, and mental health counseling. The best part? All training is provided and you can earn health care CE's at the same time.

Time commitment: 2-4 shifts per month, totaling 10-20 hours on-call. Sign up, share, or reach out to IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org for more information about this rewarding position.

REPORTING TIME: It’s time to

report your client assistance and mission cards

The quarterly inventory of client assistance and mission cards is underway.

The reporting window is open through Oct. 15.

Reporting cards in hand ASAP is most encouraged and appreciated!

By now you should have received an email with the link to the easy online form (<https://forms.office.com/r/K58VPTVEGe>) and helpful FAQs.

If you have problems reporting, contact angela.james2@redcross.org.

To successfully report, you will need the following information on the envelopes containing cards:

- Batch number,
- Envelope number,
- Last 4 digits of proxy number.

Thank you for making this process smooth and successful for our region.

Region adds three new teammates

Our region is pleased to welcome three new members to our team.

JENNIFER BIVERT is our region’s new Disaster Program Manager for Central Idaho and East Oregon.

Jennifer comes to the Red Cross after a 20-year career in health information management for health care systems

such as Northwestern, Mayo Clinic and Sutter Health.

She developed a passion for humanitarian work as a Red Cross volunteer in Disaster Cycle Services as a teenager working as a volunteer on many Northern California disasters.

In 2007, she partnered with the San Francisco Giants Community Fund to start a Junior Giants baseball league in her hometown, offering no-cost baseball to any child with a desire to play. In 2017, she and her husband joined Idaho Backcountry Veterans, serving as an event coordinator and fundraising lead.

Jennifer, who lives in Payette, has deployed on several national Disaster Relief Operations in logistics.

KEELEY VAN MIDDENDORP has joined our region’s communications team as our communications and marketing specialist.

Keeley, who lives in Missoula, grew up near Bozeman and graduated from the University of Montana in Missoula with a degree in journalism.

Since graduating, she’s had the honor of serving communities in Montana and California through storytelling and reporting as a broadcast journalist in Great Falls and in Bakersfield.

“It’s been a pleasure getting to connect with people from all backgrounds and walks of life over the years,” she said. “While I’m grateful for the many experiences as a journalist, I realize helping others and creating positive change isn’t limited to one industry, and I’m excited to explore how I can improve the lives of residents in Montana, Idaho and East Oregon communities through the American Red Cross.”

Aside from work, Keeley and her fiancé are parents to a beautiful 18-

month-old daughter, a cat and two dogs. They love to hike, explore new restaurants and, like most parents, sleep.

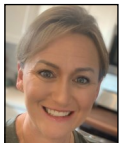
ROSEMARY CALLAHAN is a Public Health AmeriCorps member serving at the Red Cross in Billings. Rose is a class of 2020 graduate from the University of Colorado Boulder with a degree in integrative physiology and a minor in women and gender studies.

Before serving with the AmeriCorps, Rose worked as a laboratory scientist at the University of Colorado School of Medicine as a colon cancer researcher.

She has developed a strong interest in scientific communication as a tool for empowerment and civic responsibility.

Rose is a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community and uses both she/her/hers and they/them/theirs pronouns.

Her passions include hiking beautiful mountain landscapes, enjoying Americana music and reading fiction by authors such as Louise Erdrich and Octavia Butler.



Scouts: Girls learned many new skills

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that are given to families who have to evacuate quickly during an emergency.

The four girls created the bags from scratch, giving them plenty of learning opportunities throughout the multi-step, multi-month process.

“They had to create a design for the draw-string bags and had to learn how to shop for the material,” said Terri, who also works for Red Cross. “They learned that material can be expensive and that they had to keep the cost down.”

Once they had their pattern and materials, the scouts used sewing machines to add a pocket on the front of the bag that would hold a list of all the items inside. That way the families who received the comfort items would know what to replace when they were used up and could turn the bags into go-kits or travel bags for future use.

The project wasn’t always easy, the girls said, especially when the bags

weren’t closing correctly, and they had to pull out stitches and redo some work. Using a sewing machine could be tricky, too.

“We learned how to sew ... and how to sew straight at the same time,” 10-year-old Sofia said.

But the girls stuck with it, and earlier this summer presented the Red Cross with 156 red and gray bags with the Red Cross logo. They then helped Red Crossers fill them with comfort items.

“You don’t know how important this is,” Red Cross Disaster Program Manager Shellie Creveling told the girls.

“You have done a fantastic job, and this will make people a little bit happier on one of the worst days of their lives.”

And now that the girls feel more comfortable using a sewing machine, they say they’re ready to move on to blankets and quilts.

“That’s our next project,” Terri said. Despite the hard work, the scouts



Izzy, age 11, sews one of the Red Cross bags that will be filled with comfort items and given to families forced to leave their homes during a disaster.

agreed it was worth it. “It feels amazing to know I’m helping people out,” Izzy said.

Help Sound the Alarm in October

Red Cross has two Sound the Alarm free smoke alarm events coming up in our region in October, and we need volunteers to help.

On Oct. 20-21, Red Cross and its partners will install free alarms in several Meridian, Idaho, mobile home parks and will also share home fire safety information with residents. The

event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days.

On Oct. 27-28, Red Cross teams will install free alarms in Butte, also from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. each day.

Training will be provided at both events, and no experience is required.

To sign up to volunteer at the Butte event visit soundthealarm.org/montana.

Visit soundthealarm.org/idaho to sign up to help out in Meridian. You can volunteer one or both days at each event.

We also need volunteers to go door-to-door Oct. 14, 16 and 17 in Meridian to help raise awareness and encourage families to sign up for alarms. Learn more at soundthealarm.org/Idaho.

Skydive: ‘Really wanted to give back’

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tail as if I were waterskiing. I would then skim out across the top of the pond, and I would land on dry ground on the other side.”

Easier imagined than done.

The pond was boxed in by 100-foot pine trees on three sides, giving Michael little margin for error. As he closed in on the landing zone, the wind pushed Michael, making it difficult for him to get in the proper position to make the turn with enough height. That’s when he began to realize things weren’t going as planned. Still, he thought he would be OK.

“I got myself into that kind of danger zone really out of ego,” he said. “I thought at that time I was really indestructible. I had never been hurt skydiving, and I had 1,725 jumps.”

To build up the speed he needed to get across the pond, he made a 90-degree turn. But he was too low.

“I hit the ground about 10 feet before the pond – in a dive,” he said.

His knees struck first, instantly breaking both femurs. To make matters even worse, he front-flipped into the pond and its frigid October waters. A group on the ground immediately rushed to Michael’s aid, pulling him from the water and calling a lifeflight helicopter. A short time later, Michael was at a hospital in Fairfax, having 18-inch titanium rods inserted into each femur.

The surgery went well, and the next day doctors had plans for Michael to stand. But then he began feeling nauseous with a pounding headache.

“Someone came into the room and said, ‘My God Mike, you look like a ghost. All the color in your face is gone ... you don’t have any color in your skin. I think we have a problem here.’”

Because of the severity of the injury, blood was pooling in Michael’s legs and struggling to travel to his head, heart and upper extremities. Doctors rushed to give him three units of blood.

“Almost immediately my color came back, and I felt so much better,” he said. “If I had not gotten that blood transfusion and if it wouldn’t have been caught at that time it would have been extremely dire.”

A few days later, Michael left the hospital and would begin a grueling regimen of physical therapy, setting his mind on not only walking normally again but also returning to skydiving. For 40 hours a week for the next six months, Michael toiled away at the YMCA, making regaining strength and mobility a full-time job.

All that work paid off.

Just seven months after being pulled from a pond with two broken legs, Michael was back in a plane, ready to make his first jump since his terrifying accident. There was more than a little trepidation.

“It was actually more nerve wracking



Just seven months after breaking both of his femurs in a traumatic accident, Michael Graham was back to skydiving. On one of those jumps he met his future wife.

than it was to do my first jump,” he said. “On my first jump I didn’t know what to anticipate. On my 1,726 jump, I knew what I was getting myself into.”

There was no pond swooping this time, and the jump went off without a hitch.

“When I landed, all my friends gave me a high-five,” he said. “And then we packed up the parachute and did another one later that day.”

Some 16,000 more jumps would follow as Michael returned to work as a skydiving instructor. On one of those jumps he met his wife-to-be, who was making her first skydive to celebrate her 30th birthday.

Now 55, Michael no longer jumps out of planes but remains grateful to his medical team, physical therapist and Red Cross blood donors for giving him the opportunity to return to the sky and find a partner along the way.

“Even after the accident – as traumatic as it was – I got to go back and do my passion, and the Red Cross in a way helped me with that,” he said. “Had it not been for getting back on the horse and keeping the dream alive I wouldn’t have met my wonderful wife.”

The accident also cemented Michael as a lifetime Red Cross blood donor. Despite a fear of needles –hard to be-

lieve for a guy who has jumped out of planes 17,000 times -- Michael now has a two-gallon donor pin and donates as often as he can.

“Because of that three pints I got in the hospital I really wanted to give back,” he said. “It really left an imprint of how important it is.”

And that fear of needles has subsided as well. He urges those who have never donated before to give it a try, even those who might be apprehensive.

“It’s just a momentary pinch and there’s no pain to it,” he said. “Overcoming that little bit of fear really opens the gate. You need a community in order to thrive and if you don’t have people who are willing to give of themselves then that hampers us from growing and thriving.

“Once you have given blood you never ask why you would do it. You ask yourself, ‘When can I do it again?’”

DONATE LIFESAVING BLOOD

Every two seconds, someone in this country needs lifesaving blood, including patients here in Idaho. To find a blood drive near you and make an appointment to donate, visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter your zip code or call 800-RED-CROSS. Donating blood takes less than an hour and can help save more than one life.