

# Red Cross Currents

April 2022



American Red Cross  
Massachusetts

## March was Red Cross Month

Throughout the month of March, we honored people like you who make the lifesaving mission of the American Red Cross possible—the individuals across the country who turned compassion into action, helping others in times of crisis. Our Red Cross Month celebration is an annual tradition since 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued the first Red Cross Month proclamation.



We invite you and others to support the Red Cross missions:

- Make a financial donation: <https://www.redcross.org/donate/donation.html/>
- Donate blood: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>
- Volunteer: <https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer.html>
- Learning lifesaving skills: <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>



### Hear Ruth's Story

When Red Cross Collection Specialist **Ruth Koha James** was 18, she found herself separated from her family due to a civil war in Liberia. Hear her story and how she still continues to help the organization that reunited her family 30 year ago:

<https://youtu.be/nq8zKolM3Sk>

**#RedCrossMonth**

## A Message from Gail McGovern, President and CEO

Over the past month, the world has watched in disbelief at the horrific suffering in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis unfolding across Europe. More than 3 million refugees have already fled Ukraine and more than 14 million people within the country need essential services such as food, water, and health care.

Through the unrelenting destruction and shock of this evolving crisis, one thing remains constant—the commitment of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network to help the most vulnerable—and our global family has rallied to support those impacted by the



Ukraine crisis.

Those who have fled, many of whom are women, children and people with disabilities, are heartbroken and utterly exhausted as they arrive in neighboring countries, oftentimes after days-long arduous journeys. Many have received Red Cross support inside Ukraine, and when they step off a train or walk across a border, the Red Cross is there with open arms to offer essential services, emotional support, comfort, and care.

Those who remain in Ukraine are also increasingly vulnerable, as everyday necessities such as food and water grow increasingly scarce. Under danger themselves, global Red Cross teams are still working tirelessly to help people and communities impacted by conflict. Around the clock, teams are aiding the injured, providing food and water, and even offering first aid and CPR training to thousands in bomb shelters and train stations while war rages all around them.

Many of you have asked, how is the American Red Cross helping? I'm proud to say that we have stepped up and answered the call. In an effort to aid the most vulnerable, we are offering financial support to our Red Cross partners working on the ground in Ukraine and neighboring countries. These partners are providing hot meals, counseling and comfort—while also offering safe shelter, providing medical assistance, and distributing critical care items to those in need. As humanitarian needs continue to evolve in the coming days and weeks, please be assured that the American Red Cross will remain in close consultation with our global Red Cross movement partners to find the best ways to support those in need, as expectations are that the number of those seeking refuge outside of Ukraine will only continue to grow.

More than just funds, we have also deployed our staff to the region. Seven of our International Services crisis responders are already on the ground in Poland, Moldova, Hungary, and Romania, providing relief to those who have fled their homes. Our responders are lending their expertise in information management, GIS systems, communications and leadership roles, and working in lockstep with local Red Cross teams on the ground. They are all a vital part of the growing global response effort.

Nearly 30 Service to the Armed Forces staff members are also currently deployed in neighboring countries assisting with the emergency communication needs of U.S. military members and their families. These staff members are also distributing comfort kits, which contain hygiene items and other necessities, to service members and U.S. State Department staff.

I want to close this message with a story of our most recent Service to the Armed Forces team to deploy to embed with U.S. service members in Europe—a group of nine women known as Team 48. When asked about their role, one member said, “Yes, this is an incredibly historic event. But I don't focus on that. We have a job to do and the needs are great. I focus on the task at hand and how I can help the most people possible.”

Those simple words stuck with me. As humanitarians, that's what we do each day—help as many people as possible. Thanks for all you do in helping others, particularly those who need it most during this unimaginable crisis.

***With appreciation,  
Gail***

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## **Boston Heroes Breakfast**

On March 23, the American Red Cross of Massachusetts held the second Boston Heroes Breakfast. This gathering honored the heroes among us—exemplary individuals and groups who exhibit extraordinary acts of courage, kindness, and service.

**This Year's Heroes**

The following are just *some of the unsung leaders* who exemplify the humanity and volunteer service of the American Red Cross. If there were ever a time to honor heroes, this is it.



### **Sidney Murray, Southeastern Red Cross Board Member**

Passion only begins to describe the commitment that Sidney Murray has made to the Red Cross for more than a decade. As a long-time Red Cross disaster and blood service volunteer, Sidney raises awareness of our mission every day.

Sidney dedicates his volunteerism toward reaching diverse communities to increase blood donations in order to support those living with sickle cell disease, a disease affecting more than 100,000 people, predominantly of African descent. Sidney works at the local-community level to recruit donors of color, as science has shown that individuals of the same race and ethnicity

are the most effective way to help patients experiencing a sickle cell crisis.

Wearing many hats throughout his time with the Red Cross, Sidney is a leader whose volunteerism affects change and saves lives through connection, and inspiring others through hope and empowering members of his community.



### **Community Impact Hero – Ruth Rollins, Founder, We Are Better Together**

“I will give it all, I won’t give up the fight” is a line from Ruth Rollins’ theme song. As you listen to the entire song, “I’ll Fight” by Jennifer Hudson, you can almost imagine it is about the strength that runs through the entirety of Ruth’s life.

In 2007, Ruth Rollins lost her 21-year-old son Warren Daniel Hairston to a senseless killing with a gun in Boston. As a result of her personal loss, Ruth became passionate about addressing the crisis of gun trafficking in urban communities. Ruth was an early architect of Operation LIPSTICK (Ladies

Involved in Putting a Stop to Inner-City Killing), a nationally recognized organization, and served as its first Program Director.

Ruth and courageous mothers like her are working to end cycles of violence in our communities, leading her to found *We Are Better Together: Warren Daniel Hairston Project* which connects and heals women and girls affected by homicide and incarceration to prevent the cycles of violence and victimization.



### **Emergency Professional Heros – Marcus Cunningham and Nelson Souve, Officers, Barnstable Police Department**

“We sleep soundly in our beds because there are those who stand ready in the night.” Whether we attribute this quote to Orwell or Kipling, never has a single phrase summarized the work of first responders such as Marcus Cunningham and Nelson Souve from the Barnstable Police Department.

At 3 a.m., Feb. 2, 2021, officers Cunningham and Souve placed their own safety aside and entered a burning home on Cape Cod. There they found an unresponsive 68-year-old woman on the kitchen floor. Cunningham and

Souve carried the woman out of the house and across the street, where they gave her CPR with the assistance of other officers.

We are proud to recognize heroic first responders such as officers Cunningham and Souve. Their quick actions and lifesaving emergency skills are a shining example of the bravery and selflessness

that officers across the Commonwealth demonstrate each day.



### **Firefighter Heroes – Steve DesRuisseaux and Boston Firefighter Community**

Late one Saturday night last September, a fire tore through a three-story building that houses six families in Manchester, NH. Captain Steve DesRuisseaux of the Manchester Fire Department was on scene and entered the burning building after hearing that at least two people were trapped on an upper floor. Steve rescued one by a second-floor ladder but became engulfed in flames by a flashover while exiting the building. Steve was flown to Boston for emergency treatment.

The greater Boston firefighter community rallied around him. Area firefighters put his family up in a hotel and Boston Firefighters Local 718 members stood in at his son Jack's hockey games. His wife Colleen said, "It's been overwhelming what we've been feeling the last few days to have the [firefighter] family surround us."



### **Good Samaritan Hero – Mark Collum, Commercial Fisherman**

On an early September morning last year, Mark Collum went outside his home after hearing a scream for help. What he saw brought him back 20 years to his own personal tragedy.

Mark lives in Rowley, MA, a quiet town just north of Cape Ann. His morning routine was disrupted by a scream from his neighbor because her house was burning around her. Mark called 911 and entered the burning home. Twenty years prior, Mark lost his own family in a home fire, including his wife Lisa, and his four-year-old and five-month-old daughters.

Mark was able to help his neighbor, Deb Shanahan, out of her burning home. Although Deb was hurt, her injuries were not life-threatening. We are proud to recognize Mark for his heroic and selfless action to save his neighbor.



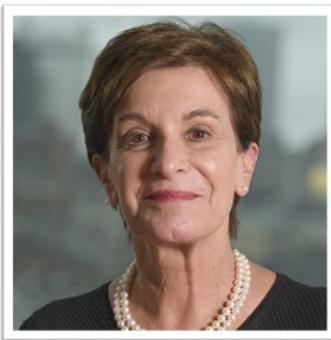
### **Military Hero – Soldiers from the 101st Field Artillery Battalion**

The 101st Field Artillery Regiment (FAR) is the oldest regiment in the U.S. Army, with its lineage dating back to 1636, then serving the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

This past August, 101st FAR members were in Kabul, Afghanistan helping to manage the withdrawal of American citizens and military personnel from the area. Headquarters Battery soldiers were among the last troops on the ground.

101st FAR soldiers stationed at Hamid Karzai International Airport helped improve the defensive stance as the troop draw-down increased throughout September. In the closing days and hours in Kabul, 101st FAR soldiers repelled rocket attacks using artillery and other ground-based weapons systems. We are proud to recognize the local soldiers from the 101st Field Artillery Regiment.

### **Nursing Hero – Jeanette Ives Erickson**



Jeanette Ives Erickson is a Chief Nurse Emerita at Massachusetts General Hospital, Instructor at Harvard Medical School, and Professor at the MGH Institute of Health Professions.

As the pandemic entered its second year in 2021, health care workers continued to staff the front lines, seeing patients with COVID-19 and its multiple variants, all while balancing emergency and nonemergency patients.

Jeanette voluntarily came out of retirement to lead a COVID vaccination site at Assembly Row in Somerville, providing a safe, caring environment to get vaccinated. The previous year, Jeanette served as co-medical and operations director for Boston Hope, a medical center constructed inside the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center to care for COVID patients.



**Youth Hero – Young Leaders—  
COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Project**

“The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible, and achieve it, generation after generation.” The Nobel laureate Pearl Buck’s words speak to the dedication of the students who helped educate and register hundreds of people in Boston for the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021.

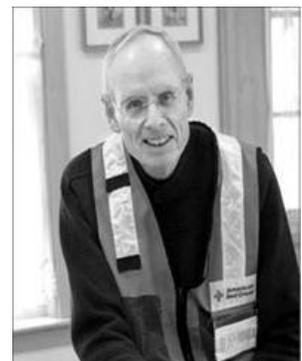
A group of youth were key leaders in the COVID-19 Vaccine Equity project alongside Boston Medical Center. Their work helped to debunk myths regarding the vaccine, get people registered to get vaccinated, and raise awareness about their local and mobile vaccine clinics. These youth leaders tirelessly focused their efforts in vulnerable communities where the vaccination rate was lower, to provide health equity to all. They created ways to communicate the importance of the COVID vaccine while building community, through hosting local events where they engaged with all members of families.

**2022 Red Cross Values Awards**

Please join us in congratulating our 2022 *Red Cross Values Award* recipients who were honored at the February 11 All Hands meeting!

**Red Cross Value: Committed – David Reed**

David, our Northeast Disaster Action Team volunteer, commits a lot of his time and effort into helping others in need. He always reliably answers the call to help, at whatever hour necessary, embodying what it truly means to be a Red Cross volunteer. Whether responding to the recent Salisbury fires, or using his Spanish language skills to present to a Latino community, David is consistently willing to help. He always steps forward to support the mission, and his dedication is what allows us to be Red Cross ready.



**Red Cross Value: Creative – Anthony Soto**

Anthony, the Biomedical Program Services Coordinator, steps right in when needed and is always available—whether it's for staffing concerns at 5

a.m., making sure drives outside of his district are staffed, or managing scheduling conflicts for our Donor Services Mobile Collection Staff blood drives in Danvers. He is a true team player and always finds creative solutions to any problems that arise. The biomedical team, and the Red Cross organization, would be lost without him.



### **Red Cross Value: Compassionate – Jessica Kealty**

Jessica came to volunteer with the Boston Food Pantry through our community partner, Boston Cares. She dedicates her time to getting to know our food insecure clients and families, and develops a unique relationship with the diverse population. She goes out of her way to gain insight into each client, including their food preferences. One time, when a client was too ill to continue coming to the Food Pantry, she began delivering food to this client's home. Jessica truly embodies what it means to be a compassionate person and Red Cross volunteer.



### **Red Cross Value: Credible – Mary Nathan**

Mary has been with the Red Cross for 14 years and serves as our Disaster Program Manager for the Western Territory. She is an incredibly caring and knowledgeable person whom the volunteers always rely on. Every volunteer has needed her at one point and she has been there for them—whether in person or just a phone call away (at any hour.) She is committed to helping others learn through her immense knowledge and experience. Her commitment to helping others, devotion to serving the needs of the community, and overall kindness is truly contagious.



### **Red Cross Value: Collaborative – Sara Ponticelli**

Sara has served in two critical roles within the Red Cross, which has allowed her to truly understand the needs of each department and how to be a team player. She is always quick to respond to you and makes sure your needs are met. Although her current role is often quite busy, you can always count on her to work with you efficiently and do so with a sincere smile. She is the definition of collaborative, and we are lucky to have her on our team.



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## **Keep Us Posted**

Please send us your news and photos, and upcoming calendar events, to:  
[News.RedCrossMA@redcross.org](mailto:News.RedCrossMA@redcross.org)

Stay up-to-date on breaking news on our social channels and tag @RedCrossMA when you post about your Red Cross work!

