

RED ALERTS!



Keeping our valued Red Cross volunteers engaged and informed



ON THE HORIZON

■ **International Youth Day**, Aug. 12. Visit un.org/en/events/youthday/.

■ **World Humanitarian Day**, Aug. 19. Visit org/en/events/humanitarianiday/.



21

Disaster responses in May. Families helped: 31.



44

Volunteers joined us in May.

MEET A LEADER



CAROL ANDERSON, Recognition Lead, Service to the Armed Forces, Townsend

The armed forces need to know that there is someone who cares about them and supports them. I enjoy supporting the volunteers who support the armed forces.

FUN FACT: I love to read. I especially enjoy romance and science fiction.



Gentry Young, who was severely injured in a car crash 11 years ago, donates platelets once or twice a month and whole blood twice a year. "I donate back in a sense to repay a debt," she said.

Blood recipient pays it forward

Seriously injured in wreck, Montana woman makes it her mission to donate blood, platelets to others in crisis

Gentry Young knows she's lucky to be alive. "Heaven is real, but I had enough angels here on earth looking out for me that I got to come back," the Great Falls woman said.

Young was on her way home from Bozeman to see her family in Power in 2008 when disaster struck. Between Townsend and Helena, Young was involved in a three-vehicle crash and was severely injured. Her neck was broken, her face disfigured and her left arm mangled. Responders used the jaws of life to pry her from her vehicle before an ambulance rushed her to Helena. There she was loaded on a helicopter and flown to Great Falls. Doctors there decided her best hope was to be flown to Seattle.

"I was bleeding to death out of my arm," she said.

Young's family estimated she needed nine units of blood to keep her going on her way to Seattle, blood available because of the generosi-

ty of donors like those who give to the American Red Cross.

"I barely made it," said Young, who was in a coma for a month in Seattle and in a medically induced coma for another month in Great Falls.

Without those blood donors, her story would have turned out much differently, Young said, and now she makes it her personal mission to give that same gift to others who might be going through a similar crisis.

"I donate back in a sense to repay a debt," the 31-year-old said.

She donates platelets once or twice a month and whole blood twice a year and has given close to five gallons to the Red Cross so far.

Her accident isn't the only reason she gives – she also does it for her grandmother Audrey, who died from leukemia in January.

"She managed to last about eight more months than they thought she would, and a lot of that was because of the platelets that were brought to her," Young said.

Before Audrey passed, her great-grandson was born.

"She got to have memories of him that she wouldn't have had without these platelets," Young said.

Young still bears the wounds of her horrific crash 11 years ago. She has epileptic seizures that make it difficult for her to return to college

“There is a reason I’m back here, and it is to help people out.”

— Gentry Young

SEE BLOOD, PAGE 2

Woman thanks Red Cross after fire

Paige Plancich was in Whistler, British Columbia, celebrating Christmas with family when she got the call from her boyfriend. Her apartment was on fire.

Plancich asked him how bad it was and if she needed to return home to Helena. Alex Facetimed her, and she watched as smoke billowed from the apartment and firetrucks surrounded the building.

She and her mother caught the red-eye home the next morning.

Alex was waiting for them at the airport in Plancich's car, which had been parked near the apartment building the night before. That's when reality set in.

"My car was covered in black soot and a whole bunch of debris," she said. "So my initial welcome back to Helena was 'Oh my God, this does not look good.'"

A lifetime of belongings had

SEE FIRE, PAGE 2



Red Cross Regional Disaster Manager Ted Koenig goes over a fire escape plan with Paige Plancich in her home in Helena in May.



MILESTONES

CINDA ROBBINS, 10 years

DAVE THOMPSON, 10 years

JILL WASHBURN, 10 years

RICHARD KARSKY, 5 years

JOAN McMANUS, 5 years

MELISSA NICHOLS, 5 years



DUTY OFFICERS NEEDED

THE DUTY OFFICER team needs YOU! This is a work-from-home position, requiring a cell phone and a computer. We are looking for people comfortable with online systems and processes to join this important team. Duty officers are the front line of our regional responses — responsible for dispatching Disaster Action Team members and maintaining the official systems of record. Please contact Catherine Rawsthorne at catherine.rawsthorne2@redcross.org or Kathy Mellinger kathy.mellinger@redcross.org to learn more.

Training available

Disaster Action Team Fundamentals training has been released.

All current Disaster Action Team volunteers, including members, service associates and supervisors, are required to take this course by March 1, 2020.

Your territorial disaster program manager or disaster program specialist, along with the engagement team, will



check in to ensure it is completed. Please send questions to catherine.rawsthorne2@redcross.org.

THREE 30-MINUTE courses are being offered in the professional development portal.

Those courses include Your Role in Workplace Diversity, Effective Team Communication and Make the Time You Need: Get Organized.

For help accessing the portal, visit the video tour at bit.ly/2xcCezR or use the job aid at rdcross.org/2wldjl2.

Fire: 'Doing very well'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

been reduced to what she had in her carry-on suitcase.

"I didn't have just even the basics ... underwear, shirts, pants, socks, shoes," she said. "I've never had that feeling ever in my life. It was a very humbling experience."

But Plancich quickly learned that she wouldn't have to start the long recovery process alone.

"Red Cross was already helping me before I even landed back in Helena," Plancich said.

She had lunch with Disaster Action Team volunteers the next day, and they began to walk her through the services they could provide.

And they listened.

"They made me feel like my feelings were real, and I had nothing to be ashamed of," she said. "So many people kept telling me things can be replaced, and at first that kind of made me angry because no one is letting me feel my feelings."

"The Red Cross set me up if I wanted to see a therapist and they gave me debit cards if I needed to get some new clothes. Just the support that Red Cross gave me all throughout the process was incredible ... all the advice, all the check-ins, everything was so much appreciated."

Plancich was told the fire most likely started in an aging furnace. There was one smoke alarm in the apartment attached to a raised ceiling well beyond her reach.

Firefighters believe it didn't even have a battery.

A mental health technician at the Shodair Children's Hospital, Plancich is now in a new apartment.

"I'm actually doing very well," she said. "I thankfully had a lot of donations from the community and a lot of support from my boyfriend and his family."

In May, a Red Cross team stopped by during their Sound the Alarm smoke alarm installation event, one of more than 40 homes they visited that weekend.



Paige Plancich said she is doing well now, six months after her Helena apartment was destroyed by fire. "Just the support that Red Cross gave me all throughout the process was incredible ... all the advice, all the check-ins, everything was so much appreciated."

They checked Plancich's alarms and discussed the best ways to escape her home in case of fire.

She didn't take it for granted.

"It's good to have a plan," she said.

"Before I was like, 'Oh nothing bad will ever happen to me. I'm not that small fraction of people whose house will catch on fire.'"

Red Cross installs free smoke alarms in homes across Montana and Idaho and teaches families about fire safety.

Visit montanaredcross.org or redcross.org/Idaho to learn more or sign up to have free alarms installed in your home.

Blood: Schedule an appointment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

or hold a job and can't raise her left arm completely.

And she takes nothing for granted.

"Just the fact that I can use my left arm at all reminds me to be so grateful of all the people who donated that blood," she said.

Right now Young is working on a

novel — "it's the best way for me to vent out my troubles and find a way to help others who are venting out their troubles" — and volunteers with her church.

"Faith has gotten me a long ways."

And besides giving blood and platelets, she also donates her hair to Wigs for Kids.

"There's a reason I'm back here, and it is to help other people out," she said.

Platelet and blood donors of all types

are urged to give to help trauma patients like Young and others who depend on these lifesaving products.

A blood donation takes about an hour from start to finish, but the actual donation itself takes only eight to 10 minutes.

Schedule an appointment today by using the Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 800-RED CROSS.