March/April 2020

RED ALERTS!

Keeping our valued Red Cross volunteers engaged and informed

When a January fire swept across the prairie in Glacier County, along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains in northcentral Montana, two colonies of evacuated Hutterites, members of a communal Anabaptist sect, wandered a Cut Bank grocery store with no place to go.

The store manager knew to call Landis Meeks, the face of Red Cross to people across a wide swath of the region. Landis set up a shelter for three busloads of Hutterites, members of a communal Anabaptist sect, in the town civic center. A local pizza place dropped off 20 pizzas.

Landis said perseverance usually is enough to see a project to success.

Disaster responses in February. People helped: 155.

LET’S BE SAFE

For tips for keeping you and your family safe during the coronavirus outbreak, check out these sites:

- www.cdc.gov
- www.who.int
- www.ready.gov
- redcross.org/about-our-news-and-events/

Watch a personal message from Red Cross CEO Gail McGovern here: vimeo.com/39866

Volunteer Landis Meeks organizes six blood drives a year in Cut Bank and helps respond to disasters in an area that spans 200 miles. He’s been with the Red Cross for 30 years.

A Red Cross ‘ambassador’

From opening shelters to organizing blood drives, Cut Bank volunteer tallies three decades of service

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LANDIS MEEKS BY THE NUMBERS

Total blood donations: 173

Gallons donated: 22

Drives Landis organizes in Cut Bank each year: 6

Units collected at those drives last year: 234

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See Meeks, Page 2

Coronavirus: Staying informed

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to grow, the Red Cross of Idaho and Montana is dedicated to sharing information with our workforce as it becomes available. We are focused on the safety and wellbeing of our employees, volunteers, blood donors and recipients, partners and clients while continuing to carry out our mission.

Each Friday, the Red Cross of Idaho and Montana will send out an email with updated information about the impact of the virus on our organization and steps we are taking to keep our workforce and clients safe. We will also recalculate portions of that information here.

If you have questions about the coronavirus, please email them to IDMT.info@redcross.org. We have formed a team who will monitor this email and answer questions as promptly as possible.

Events postponed

Following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and other public health officials, the Red Cross of Idaho and Montana has made the decision to postpone our Sound the Alarm smoke alarm installation events in Nampa.

See Coronavirus, Page 2

Let your voice be heard: Take your volunteer satisfaction survey
RED ALERTS!

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“Usually things will work out,” he said. “Sometimes they don’t work out the first time, but you just keep plugging.”

When a disaster call comes in, Meeks might be headed to a fire in Bozeman or wind damage in Babb, a 200-mile range.

Landis became involved with the Red Cross through his involvement with the Knights of Columbus.

“One of our pillars is civic activities. I enjoy talking to people about what I could do to help the Red Cross. I helped the organizer, and she said at the end of it, I’m retiring, effective immediately. I’ve been doing it ever since,” he said.

That was 1990. Five years later, someone called and said an individual needed a hand after a house fire.

“I found out what they needed, and I visited with someone at Red Cross,” he said.

Just like that, Landis was on the Disaster Action Response team.

Landis is the Red Cross to the people of his community in northcentral Monta- na, said Ted Koening, regional disaster officer for Idaho and Montana.

“Wearing that badge and that vest, being in the community and having those conversations, Landis has built the Red Cross’s reputation and extend- ed the work we do,” Ted said. “We appreciate his willingness to say yes to the work we do, and to commit to service in his community.

Landis frequently donated blood until he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He organized six blood drives a year in Cut Bank.

“Landis’s deep roots in the community and the respect his neighbors have for him are key to his success, added Wen- dy McGrew, regional volunteer services officer for Idaho and Montana. “He’s been a stable part of that community for so long.”

Landis has been a blood donor as well as blood drive organizer. He’s given 22 gallons of blood, though pan- creatic cancer forestalled recent dona- tions. He’s a big advocate for the Red Cross blood donor app.

“We have a lot of people who want to come in to donate, but they can be in and out in a heartbeat,” he said. Landis calls previous donors to en- courage them to come out for drives, which makes a big difference in turn- out.

Those who help him with blood drives keep him inspired. The newspa- per calls sometimes to remind him to get information in for the next drive. Hutterite colonies come in force to donate blood.

“There’s a good group of people who I’m a fiscal review volunteer, and I give blood

Montana volunteer John McGrew: “I first became a blood donor almost 40 years ago while in high school when the Red Cross came to our campus to recruit students as new donors. At the time, my mother was recovering from cancer and had been a blood recipient. Since she was no longer eligible to give, it seemed like a great thing to do to make up the difference. I’ve been a regular donor ever since.

Years later, I was told that because my blood lacked a particular benign virus that most of the rest of the population possessed, my blood was very valuable to preemie babies who had little to no immunity from common pathogens. It’s nice to know that there are children alive today because I took an hour of my day every couple of months to donate.

In our technologically advanced and affluent society, we take so much for grant- ed. We are able to manufacture so many amazing things with such seeming ease, quantity and at low cost. And yet, there is still only one place that blood comes from, and when someone needs it, they need it now and it’s invaluable to that person. That’s why I give.”

Why do you give? Send an email and a picture to matthew.ochsner@redcross.org.

Coronavirus: Send us your questions

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Borstem and Hillings. We hope to reschedule these events and will share information as it becomes available. Coronavirus concerns also have led to the postponement of our Disaster Insurance Fund, and we also hope to reschedule this event. Stay tuned on this front as well.

Keeping our facilities safe

Red Cross is focusing on keeping our buildings safe through increased clean- ing and sanitizing.

Buildings are cleaned daily, with high-impact areas being cleaned every four hours.

Anyone entering our buildings — including paid staff, volunteers and blood donors — will have their tempera- ture taken prior to their medical screening.

All donors will have their temperature taken prior to their service.

● Hand sanitizer is available at all stations.

● Staff are required to decon- taminant equipment and sur- faces after processing each donor at each step in the pro- cess.

● Blood drives are set up to maximize distance between each donor.

We are extending donation center hours to accommodate more donors.

If you are healthy, please consider making a blood or platelet donation appointment at RedCrossBlood.org or by calling 800-RED-CROSS.

— Story by writing team volunteer Kristen Imboky
When I became a Red Cross volunteer in 2012, I couldn’t wait to finish my initial training so I could start responding to disaster calls and eventually deploy on national disasters. Once I studied the long list of options, there was no doubt in my mind what I wanted to do first -- become an emergency response vehicle driver. Not only did it sound challenging and exciting, but also helpful to communities in need in so many ways. Once my initial requirements like sheltering, food safety, and feeding were met, I dove in head-first and took all the required courses. Once my road test was completed, I became a proud emergency response vehicle driver!

My first assignment wasn’t actually a disaster response at all, but actually the Western Days parade in Twin Falls. I remember well the pride I felt as the crowd waved and cheered as we drove by. Many other assignments were to follow, including smoke alarm installs here in southeastern Idaho, hydration and first aid stations at air shows in the Twin Falls and Jerome County airports and numerous disaster action team calls.

But in 2017 the first truly big call came in -- the chance to drive our ERV across the country to respond to a major disaster. Don Nesbit and I were deployed to Houston to assist with Hurricane Harvey. We were stationed at Kitchen 11 in Sugarland. Don was able to stay with our ERV as a driver who helped with feeding, and I was assigned as the kitchen supervisor. I had the privilege of sending our ERV along with dozens of others, loaded with hot meals out to feed thousands of people daily throughout North Texas. We did this for five weeks until our mission was complete.

Experiencing this massive operation first-hand and seeing the ERVs in action was very emotional. Knowing that our own ERV was instrumental in this massive operation made it an extra special deployment for me. A few weeks ago, Jim Brown and I drove that ERV from Jerome to Idaho Falls to empty all the cargo into storage, then returned with an empty truck. This was to be the last mission for the ERV, which was decommissioned on March 10. The #3079 served Idaho proudly for many years, leaving behind a plethora of memories. While #3079 has moved on, we have a new ERV in our stable. Don and I were fortunate enough to deploy cross-country again in 2018 on the maiden voyage of our brand new ERV, where we began a new chapter of memories in South Carolina for Hurricane Florence. It was another emotional and rewarding experience, and I’ll be ready when the next opportunity comes my way to once again deliver comfort and care with the help of our emergency response vehicle. – By Idaho volunteer Diana Ochsner

Client assistance card verification a success

Thanks to client assistance card and mission card holders who responded to our February request to electronically verify information on cards in your possession. Your help with our new process made our trial run a success. This process is now our quarterly routine so we can efficiently maintain regional compliance. Please keep an eye out for reminders for the next quarterly cardholder verification in early June.

In the meantime, continue to send Charge Out Record forms (F1032) to Angela James whenever you receive new cards or use up those in your possession. If you have questions, please reach out to Angela at angela.james@redcross.org.

Thanks for completing disaster training

This year, you’ve likely received a call-to-action to complete updated Disaster Action Team training. The updated training, delivered on our online learning system, EDGE, included Disaster Action Team Fundamentals and Disaster Action Team Management, amongst others.

Now, nearing the end of this push to complete the updated training, we’re happy to report on its success.

As a direct result of your efforts, the region has increased its capacity to support our mission. The most visible example of this is the increase in fully trained Disaster Action Team service associates and supervisors: 161 of our 190 service associates and supervisors are current on the training for their roles.

Along with the completed training and promotions, this effort has also taught us the importance of continuing education. Just like the professionals we all rely on in our daily lives, continuing education helps us at Red Crossers expand our knowledge and stay up-to-date on the latest efforts the organization is making to serve its clients better.

For those of you reading this who are new or newly trained service associates or supervisors as a result of this continuing education, thank you for your hard work and commitment to our mission.