October 2022

RED ALERTS!
Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed

ON THE HORIZON
Oct. 9-15, Fire Prevention Week
Oct. 10, World Mental Health Day
Oct. 10, Indigenous Peoples’ Day
Oct. 16, World Food Day
Oct. 31, Halloween

20 Disaster responses in September. Clients helped: 96

MILESTONES
October
DANNY RAINE, 45 years
ERIN BRAY, 25 years
JO SCOTT, 10 years
CATHERINE ANDERSON, 5 years
CHRIS BATT, 5 years
SANDRA BLACKMER, 5 years
WILLIAM BUCK, 5 years
SEINA CANALES, 5 years
SARAH DEFROST, 5 years
JUSTIN HAKING, 5 years
MARGARET HOPSON, 5 years
DEIANA JACKSON, 5 years
HAYWARD JOHNSON, 5 years
RIHANNON KNOX, 5 years
KATHERINE YARRISH, 5 years
KEITH KUKULKA, 5 years
ALAN MILLER, 5 years
CONNIE MILLER, 5 years
BARBARA MINER, 5 years
DANN STOOLMAN, 5 years
RICK STOOLMAN, 5 years
AMANDA THIEL, 5 years

INFORMATION
We will host virtual information sessions to discuss the need for trained disaster volunteers in large responses like Hurricane Ian and share information about local volunteer needs. Sessions will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 4, at 1 and 5:30 p.m. Click here to RSVP: https://my.redcross.org/RSVP.

Volunteer has fingers in multiple pies of assistance

It’s been a whirlwind few weeks for Idaho Red Cross volunteer Vicky Johns. Over Labor Day weekend, Vicky, who lives in Meridian, had just finished donating blood and was at the store picking up a few things when she got a call from Regional Disaster Officer Scott O’Connell. An overnight fire at a Ketchum condominium building had destroyed 26 homes, and Scott was looking for someone who could jump in the vehicle with him and meet with the families who had lost everything. So just two hours after she had finished up in the donor’s chair, Vicky pivoted into her disaster responder role and was in the passenger’s seat for the 150-mile trek to Ketchum alongside Scott and volunteer Jack Smith.

The team talked with families, began casework, handed out comfort kits and checked in with community partners before rolling back into Boise at midnight.

Vicky’s reliability as a volunteer makes her a go-to person when immediate help is needed. Yet Vicky’s take on the quick trip was how well others responded to the situation. “The city up there was wonderful,” Vicky said. “Even today when I follow up with the clients, they’re getting a lot of community support. They really took care of them.

A few days later Vicky shifted gears again, beginning a virtual two-week disaster deployment with the Northern California wildfires, assisting in staff services. In this role, she checks in volunteers as they arrive on the scene.

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Her answer: Yes

Vicky Johns wears many volunteer hats for Red Cross, several simultaneously. She is quick to respond when needed, and she says she loves it. “It keeps me busy and out of trouble.”

BECOME A VOLUNTEER
The American Red Cross offers volunteer opportunities for almost any interest and skill set. Training is provided and the payoff is priceless. Learn more by emailing IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or visiting redcross.org/volunteer.

Montana flood destroys hard work

Just two months after Ed and Lucy Nilson had finished renovating the basement in their Red Lodge home, their work was wiped out in only a few hours. On June 13-14, heavy rainfall followed by significant mountain snowmelt swelled rivers and creeks, including Rock Creek which runs just a block from the Nilsons’ home.

“...there was so much water coming down,” Ed said. “It was a perfect storm.”

The Nilsons watched as water levels continued to rise, and at about 1:30 in the morning on June 13, they got a knock on their door from local law enforcement telling them they needed to evacuate. They headed to a nearby community church.

Ed and Lucy Nilson

SEE FLOOD, PAGE 3

SEE YES, PAGE 3
Ukrainian plight focus of event

In September, the Red Cross took part in a special event in downtown Boise focusing on the situation in Ukraine, the U.S. response and the humanitarian and legal implications of the crisis.

Idaho Sen. Jim Risch provided the keynote address, highlighting his recent visit to Ukraine and his perspective on his conversation with President Zelen-sky. A panel discussion followed, featuring Risch, former CIA analyst Jeff Carr; and George Lynch, the American Red Cross lead lecturer on International Humanitarian Law. Red Cross of Idaho, Montana and East Oregon CEO Nicole Sirak Irwin also highlighted the international work of the Red Cross.

Reyn Eguren, president of the Eguren Public Policy Firm and an Idaho Red Cross board member, was the moderator. Tina Polischuk also talked about the work of the Idaho Alliance for Ukrainian Refugees and Immigrants. About 70 people attended.

Medical pros needed as volunteers

Find out which volunteers were honored for service over the past year, and take a look at the Position of the Month to see if you can recommend someone who might be interested. Also, Ketchup with Friends is at a new time. Read on.

Position of the Month

Every day, the Red Cross sees the heartbreaking saga of people coping with more intense storms, heavier rainfall, higher temperatures, more devastating wildfires. It’s critical to have a trained and ready volunteer workforce to make sure we can provide relief at a moment’s notice.

Title: Disaster Health Services Volunteer

Locations: Virtual

Time commitment: Two to four shifts per month, for a total of 10 to 20 hours per month on-call.

Job description: This position is great for medical professionals who want to use their skills to give back. During times of disaster, these volunteers provide disaster-related health care including assistance with replacement of medications and consumable medical supplies, health assessments and referrals for spiritual care and mental health counseling.

Find online training provided and courses toward nursing continuing education units.

Questions? Contact IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org for more information.

Ketchup with Friends

We want to remind you all of the new time for Ketchup with Friends, from 7-7:30 p.m. in the evening. This is our social time for volunteers to swap stories and experiences, and get to know each other. Please join fellow volunteers at our virtual social time, Tuesday, Oct. 11, from 7-7:30 p.m.

Those who attend are eligible to win a door prize. Click here to join the meeting.

If you join and don’t have access, please send Nate Gilbert an email at Nathan.Gilbert@RedCross.org, and we will see what we can do to help get you connected.

We hope you can join us this month. See you all there!

Volunteer Winners

Congratulations to the eight winners of this year’s volunteer hours drawings. All volunteers who logged at least 20 hours were entered into a drawing to win a great Red Cross prize of their choosing. Those who logged at least 100 hours were also entered in a second drawing.

This year’s winners in the 20 hours or more group were: Traci Bruha — Communications/ public affairs and disaster services, Baker, Mont., 33 hours

Paul Hicks — Disaster services, Helena, Mont., 527 hours

Anita Byrne — Blood donor ambassador, Missoula, Mont., 75 hours

Susan Baugher — Development/ fundraising, Boise, Idaho, 81 hours

This year’s winners in the 100-hours drawing:

Pamela Hochstein — Blood Services transportation specialist, Merrill, Idaho, 107 hours

Megan McGuire — Disaster services, Vale, Ore., 378 hours

Angela Wartel — Disaster services, and Service to the Armed Forces, Lewiston, Idaho, 138 hours

Mike Darr — Blood Services transportation specialist, disaster services and Service to the Armed Forces, 258 hours

Congrats again. And please remember to keep logging your hours.

Time to report the status of client assistance, mission cards

The quarterly inventory of Client Assistance and Mission Cards is under way. The reporting window is open Oct. 1 - 28.

Reporting cards in hand as early as possible in the reporting window is the best practice.

By now you should have received an email with the link to the easy online form (https://forms.office.com/w/v/bMFGdQjEGd) 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, and last 4 of proxy number. Thank you for making this process smooth and successful for our region.
A familiar face in our Red Cross region, Gini Kay, has become our Preparedness and Partnerships manager. This new position will help develop key partnerships that will help make the communities we serve more resilient.

Gini, who lives in Missoula, has been a member of our region’s Volunteer Services team for the past four years and has a passion for preparedness. She holds a master’s in public health and fell in love with preparedness while researching how smoke molecules affect breathing during wildfire season. She has a vision for how we can support our volunteer leaders and help build a sustainable approach to preparedness.

“Congratulations, Gini!”

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Flood: Water just poured in

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hopeful that their home would be spared, but after a bridge washed out, the Rock Creek floodwaters changed course.

“We ended up with about five feet of water in the basement that of course took everything,” he said. “We had three trailer loads of drywall and carpet and a vanity and just stuff.”

Their backyard and detached garage also flooded, and the water was just one step away from spilling into the main floor of their home as well. The Nilsons evacuated for the next 10 days, staying at a friend’s house until power and water were restored.

As the Nilsons and their neighbors worked to regroup and recover, several organizations, including the Red Cross and Salvation Army, were there to lend a hand. They attended an event at the Red Lodge Civic Center where non-profits and churches were available to talk about the help they could provide. Red Cross gave the Nilsons financial aid they could use to help meet their most immediate needs and also provided them with a cleanup kit with items like a bucket, shovel and gloves they could use as they began the difficult process of cleaning their home.

“We appreciate everyone showing that care and compassion,” he said.

During its months-long response, the Red Cross and its partners served more than 4,900 meals and snacks to those impacted by flooding across the state, distributed 800 emergency kits, offered more than 400 people mental health support and spiritual care and delivered more than $50,000 in financial assistance.

Several months after the Nilsons evacuated their home in the early morning hours, they have made significant progress in re-creating their base- ment. They have replaced their furnace and hot water heater and have begun to put up new drywall, but work like replacing the downstairs wiring is still ongoing.

“We’re getting there,” he said.

There’s still much work to do throughout the Red Lodge community as well. The home across the street had to be torn down after floodwaters pushed their neighbor’s detached garage off its foundation and into their house, causing severe structural dam- age. Repairs also continue on infrastructure like bridges and roads.

“People who showed up to help us like the Red Cross. We will be forever grateful.”

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and makes sure they have a place to sleep, connects them with a supervisor and then helps out-process them as they leave their assignment.

“It’s just making sure they’re actively engaged and not forgotten somewhere,” she said.

She’s also simultaneously helping those closer to home who have been impacted by disaster.

Vicky is overseeing a three-person team in Montana helping families whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged during June’s flooding apply for financial assistance beyond what they received earlier this summer. She said it’s important to talk about the kinds of aid they could use as they began the difficult process of cleaning their home.

“People who showed up to help us like the Red Cross. We will be forever grateful.”

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BECOME A RED CROSS DISASTER RESPONDER

Red Cross volunteers helped more than 550 Montanans last year following disasters. Besides meeting families’ immediate needs like food, clothing and shelter, Red Cross responders also connect clients with disaster mental health support and help replace items like eye glasses and prescriptions.

To learn more about becoming a Red Cross Disaster Action Team volunteer, visit redcross.org/volunteer or email HMRT.Recruiting@redcross.org.

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Yes: It’s great to have the time to give

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Donating blood, meeting with fami- lies after the Ketchum condo fire, de- ploying virtually to assist with the California wildfires and leading recov- ery work in Montana—Vicky has worn countless Red Cross hats in September and touched many lives.

“I love it,” she said. “It keeps me busy and out of trouble.”

In December, Vicky will celebrate her 10th anniversary with Red Cross—an organization she connected with through happenstance while living in California. Retired from her career with the Air National Guard, Vicky was volunteering with a youth program and attending a service fair in San Luis Obispo when she noticed the booth directly across from theirs. It was the Red Cross.

“I was talking to them about what they do, and I was like ‘Hey, I would love to do that,’” she said. “I signed up that night.”

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Almost a decade and countless con- tributions later, she’s glad she did.

“Time is just something I have that people need, and I want to give it, just like blood,” she said.

“Every day you kind of feel good at night when you go to bed that you can say you made someone’s life a little bit better.”

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Matt Ochsner
Regional Communications Director

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