



American Red Cross
Southern California Region

2025 *Inland Empire Heroes Awards*

Celebrate the Hero Within!

Tuesday, March 18, 2025
Ontario Convention Center

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**We cannot stop crises, but we can make
sure people never face them alone.**

*This year's Inland Empire Heroes Awards
will benefit Red Cross Disaster Relief.*



The American Red Cross responds to an emergency every 8 minutes. Our purpose is to meet the immediate disaster-caused needs of individuals, families, and communities.

From home fires to multi-state natural disasters, the Red Cross goes wherever we're needed, so people can have safe shelter, hot meals, health and mental health services, emergency supplies, recovery assistance and more when they need them most.

The Red Cross responds to disasters down the street, across the country and around the world. From Hurricanes Helene and Milton to the Airport Fire, Line Fire, Bridge Fire, Los Angeles wildfires and countless other crises, the Red Cross has been there for thousands of people across the nation — providing vital relief and tangible help and hope — to ensure no one faces a disaster alone. In Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, the Red Cross responds to hundreds of disasters each year, from devastating home fires affecting a single family to wildfires, flooding and debris flows affecting entire communities. We need your financial support to continue this vital work.

The Red Cross honors donor intent and all donations earmarked for Disaster Relief will be used to help people affected by disasters, big and small. We're committed to being the very best stewards of our donors' dollar. The Red Cross keeps our expenses low and an average of **90 cents of every dollar** the Red Cross spends is invested in delivering care and comfort to those in need.



Learn more about how the
American Red Cross helps
in the event of a disaster.



Please consider donating today.
Text the word **IEHEROES25** to
76278 or donate online.

An anonymous donor will match all donations made at the event up to \$5,000.

When you donate to the American Red Cross, your donation is used efficiently. An average of 90 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. The American National Red Cross is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions to the American National Red Cross are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. The Red Cross' tax identification number is 53-0196605.

Event Program

Registration and Networking

Presentation of Colors
San Manuel Honor Guard Team

National Anthem
Annetti Bullock, Chaplain at the Riverside Police Department

Introduction and Welcome

Award Presentations

Corporate Hero Award
Quality Foam Packaging, Aerofoam Industries

Good Samaritan Hero Award
Thomas Mann

Gift of Life Hero Award
DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont

Disaster Service Hero Award
Travis Snyder

First Responder Hero Award
Officer Ransom De Castro, *Riverside Police Department*

Service to the Armed Forces Hero Award
Raven Hilden, *MilVet*

Youth Hero Award
Ariel Barba

Animal Welfare Hero Award
San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Animal Care

Closing Remarks

**Thank you to our 2025
Inland Empire Heroes Selection Committee**

Andrew Behnke | Tempe Essell | Lashon Halley
Donna Luginbill | Dora Mejia | Ed Monie | Michael Ramirez
Ivan Sandoval | Laura Tolbirt | Chris Venhoff

Event Emcee



Shelby Nelson
Event Emcee

Shelby Nelson joined KTLA 5 News as a reporter and multimedia journalist in the Inland Empire in December 2021.

The Covina-native graduated from San Francisco State University with a bachelor's degree in Broadcast Electronic Communication Arts. San Francisco is where Shelby kick-started her career. She worked as a writer for KTLA's sister station, KRON 4 News, and later moved on to KPIX 5. After living in the Bay Area for six years, Shelby moved to Palm Springs to become a multimedia journalist and reporter at KESQ-TV.

In her downtime Shelby enjoys traveling and hiking with her husband and their two dogs. She has committed to furthering her education to pursue a degree in public health. Her goal is to eventually be a health reporter.

2025 Inland Empire Heroes Honorees



Corporate Hero

Quality Foam Packaging, Aerofoam Industries

Quality Foam Packaging and its sister company, Aerofoam Industries, were founded by Noel and Ruth Castellon to provide comfortable seating solutions for commercial airlines. For over 25 years, the Castellons have supported the American Red Cross, donating

more than \$250,000 to support the Red Cross mission and helping the organization make a difference every day for those who rely on its services in disasters and other emergencies.

Presented by



Good Samaritan Hero

Thomas Mann

In July 2024 Thomas Mann, a certified American Red Cross Lifeguard, Water Safety Instructor, and Lifeguard Instructor, was on his way to work as a Lead Lifeguard with the City of Temecula Aquatics Team when he stopped at a gas station. While parking, he was notified of an unresponsive person surrounded by a crowd of people. He immediately assessed the scene,

where he saw an unconscious man on the ground, bleeding from the back of his head and not breathing. Without hesitation, Thomas ran to his car, grabbed his hip pack and immediately began performing CPR. He provided continuous care until EMS arrived and took over medical care. Using his Red Cross training and knowledge, Thomas was able to help save the man's life.

Presented by





Gift of Life Hero DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont

Since September 2020, the DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont has hosted 44 Red Cross blood drives. Thanks to their dedication, these blood drives have resulted in the collection of 1,178 units of blood, which could positively impact thousands of lives.


Having dedicated blood drive sponsors like the DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont is invaluable, and helps the Red Cross provide lifesaving blood to patients in need. The efforts of blood drive hosts like the DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont not only contribute to the vital need for blood donations but also foster a sense of community spirit and compassion.

Presented by 



Disaster Services Hero Travis Snyder

In February 2023, winter storms brought historic snowfall to the San Bernardino mountains, trapping many in their homes and significantly impacting accessibility to mountain communities. Seeing so many in need of help, Travis Snyder of Advantage Backhoes worked tirelessly to move snow clearing equipment up the mountain, even hiking 19 miles from his house down the mountain initially to meet his operators and facilitate the movement of equipment up the mountain. In the following days, Travis and his operators worked day and night to dig out neighborhoods inundated with snow. Travis and his operators worked 24 hours a day for 19 days straight while working with San Bernardino County emergency response teams, playing a critical role in helping those impacted and proving to be an invaluable asset to the Incident Management Team who was tasked with rescue efforts.

Presented by  DOUBLETREE
by Hilton
CLAREMONT



First Responder Hero
Officer Ransom De Castro
Riverside Police Department

In September 2024, Officer Ransom De Castro with the Riverside Police Department was dispatched to a call of a one-month-old baby who was in distress and not breathing. When he arrived on scene, Officer De Castro assessed the situation and began performing infant CPR, which resulted in the baby beginning to breathe on its own. He continued to assist when medical personnel arrived. The infant began to show signs of life and was immediately transported to a local hospital for additional treatment. Trauma staff at the hospital stabilized the infant, who began breathing on its own with good vital signs. Officer De Castro's heroic efforts prevented significant brain damage in the baby and ultimately helped save the infant's life.

Presented by **Michael Ramirez**



Service to the Armed Forces Hero
Raven Hilden, MilVet

Raven Hilden is the founder and CEO of MilVet, an organization that supports members of the military community in the Inland Empire and beyond. Some programs include emergency veteran support, advocacy, holiday assistance for military families and more. Every month, MilVet coordinates care package assembly events and distributes them to deployed service members across the world, including at Red Cross stations throughout Eastern Europe. "Raven Hilden's hard work, dedication, leadership, and vision is the fuel that moves the MilVet mission forward. Her presence is enriching and inspiring, and the Inland Empire is a much better community with her in it," says Raul Diaz, Regional Service to the Armed Forces Program Manager with the American Red Cross Southern California Region.

Presented by  **Altura**
CREDIT UNION



Youth Hero Ariel Barba

On the morning of September 1, 2024, nine-year-old Ariel Barba woke up and checked on her three-year-old brother, Elijah, as she did every morning. She realized her brother was not where he should be, looked outside and noticed he was face down in the pool. Without hesitation, Ariel jumped into the pool and pulled her brother from the water. She immediately began performing CPR on her unconscious brother. An adult family member arrived and rushed Elijah to a nearby hospital, where he received medical treatment. Medical staff advised Elijah's family that Ariel had most likely saved her brother's life. Ariel learned CPR from watching a video on YouTube that showed a child doing the job of a lifeguard and showed step-by-step how to perform CPR. Thanks to her knowledge and heroism, Ariel saved her brother's life.

Presented by  **Sysco**
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food and service



Animal Welfare Hero San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Animal Care

During the Line Fire and Bridge Fires in 2024, San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Animal Care (Animal Care) played a vital role in helping animals displaced by the wildfires. Animal Care operated three shelters for evacuated animals, which were co-located at disaster shelters run by the Red Cross and partners – allowing evacuees to be housed as close as possible to their pets. In total, Animal Care cared for 645 animals between the three animal shelter locations, including pigs, chickens, goats, sheep, donkey, ducks, tortoise, guinea pigs, rabbits, horses, alpaca, peacocks, turtles, turkeys, parakeets, and a gecko. By caring for evacuated animals, they not only helped impacted animals but also provided comfort to their owners, who were able to evacuate knowing there would be a safe place for their pets.

Presented by  **usbank**

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WE SUPPORT OUR LOCAL HEROES

With gratitude, Altura recognizes the extraordinary individuals who make the Inland Empire a stronger, brighter place.



Check out our Impact Report: AlturaCU.com



Circle K is a proud supporter of the American Red Cross. Congratulations to the 2025 Inland Empire Heroes Awards honorees!



DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont
is honored to receive the
Gift of Life Hero Award!

Congratulations to all of the
2025 Inland Empire Heroes
for their outstanding courage!



DOUBLE TREE
by Hilton™
CLAREMONT

WHERE FLAVOR GETS ITS WINGS



HIGH DESERT - RIVERSIDE - REDLANDS -
CALIMESA - MORENO VALLEY - GRAND
TERRACE - CORONA - TEMECULA

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FRESH UP
RESTAURANTS

Don & Donna Luginbill
congratulate the 2025
Inland Empire Heroes!



Regional Leadership

American Red Cross Southern California Region | Leadership Team

Sean Mahoney, Regional Chief Executive Officer

Malinda McDonald, Chief Operating Officer

Glenn Maddalon, Regional Chief Development Officer

Debbie Leahy, Regional Disaster Program Officer

Daniel Beighley, Regional Service to the Armed Forces Director

Christine Welch, Regional Communications Director

Debbie Pari, Regional Volunteer Services Officer

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Lois Beckman, Executive Director (Riverside County)

Yvette Baysinger, Executive Director (San Bernardino County)

Ann Anderson, Director, Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program

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#IEHeroes



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linkedin.com/company/socalredcross



Hero videos from today's event will be shared at
YouTube.com/SoCalRedCross



Photos from today's event will be shared at
Flickr.com/SoCalRedCross

Nominations are accepted year-round at redcross.org/ieheroes

American Red Cross



Thank You!

Valued Community Partners



**American
Red Cross**

Mission

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Diversity Vision Statement

The American Red Cross aspires to be an organization fully committed to diversity and inclusion by creating and maintaining a diverse, high-performing workforce of employees and volunteers who reflect all communities we serve; by cultivating a collaborative, inclusive and respectful work environment that empowers all contributors; and by leveraging diverse partnerships — all of which helps to ensure culturally competent service delivery supported by effective community leadership and engagement.