



## California fires touch Honolulu woman

In September 2015, raging California Butte and Valley fires burned more than 150,000 square acres and destroyed more than 1,700 homes, displacing thousands of families. The American Red Cross began helping within the first minutes of the fires, providing shelter, food, water, basic necessities, mental health, and basic health services for thousands of people in the path of the wildfires.

Tina Doty, an Oahu Disaster Services mental health volunteer, was on a trip from Honolulu to Napa Valley when the fires broke out. When she arrived she was unaware that that one of the most destructive wildfires in the area's history was about to take hold.

"I remember looking out my window at the vineyards and noticing the wind had picked up," says Tina. "I got an ominous feeling in the pit of my stomach and I hastily made my way to the Red Cross shelter to offer my assistance."

### Rushing to help

Tina was quickly given a Red Cross vest, hat, and t-shirt and put to work. "I saw many people covered in soot, a look of shock, despair, and hopelessness etched upon their faces."

She recalls tragic stories of residents barely making it out of the fire areas alive, often with just a few belongings or the pets they could carry. "One resident mentioned that he was unable to start their car because he realized that he was holding his house keys. When he turned around to get his car key, his house was burning," says Tina. "He walked out of the area and eventually made it to the shelter."

Other people who made it to the shelter told stories of having just enough time to get in their vehicles with family



members and then speeding through fireballs to escape. Many lost their homes and all of their belongings.

### Compassion and care come first

"I realized that that this was my very first large-scale community disaster as a Red Cross volunteer," says Tina. "Kudos goes out to the many area firefighters who are still fighting the blaze. We were lucky that our house was unaffected. Although I was definitely not anticipating this terrible event, I took away from it that even with all the global problems taking place around us, human caring and compassion still rules. I am very proud to be a Red Cross volunteer."

**Help families in your own community and across the country who are facing an emergency—visit [redcross.org/hi/honolulu](http://redcross.org/hi/honolulu)**

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A message  
from the  
CEO

## You answered the call. We thank you.

Every March during Red Cross Month we take time to reflect on the impact you and the entire American Red Cross community has on the lives of so many. It's also the time of year when we renew our commitment to our mission—to **prevent and relieve suffering**. It's a simple yet powerful call to action, which you have answered time and again.

Please know that your support of the Hawaii Red Cross truly makes a difference in the lives of those who need us the most. I have seen despair turn into hope—from the emergency shelters housing disaster victims to the military hospitals caring for our wounded heroes. All thanks to you.

I hope that as you enjoy this issue of *Crossnotes*, you'll realize that you have a hand in truly making an impact on our community. **Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making your community and the world a better place.**

Thank you,

Coralie Chun Matayoshi, CEO  
American Red Cross  
Pacific Islands Region—  
Hawaii, Guam, Saipan  
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## Fire prevention and safety come first

During National Home Fire Prevention Month in October, Hawaii Red Cross Volunteers, along with representatives from the Honolulu Fire Department and the International Brotherhood of Electric Workers, Local Union 1186, visited homes across Oahu to install 190 free smoke alarms. Two homes were provided with adaptive alarms for the visually and hearing impaired.

Working smoke alarms cut the risk of death by home fires in half and as part of the Red Cross mission to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies, our local Red Cross volunteers are educating the community and providing vital information on fire safety and the importance of maintaining working smoke alarms.

This event was a follow-up to the Red Cross canvassing event in Pauoa Valley, where the home of two elderly residents was destroyed in a fire in August. One home was that of the Higa family, who were so grateful for this program. They were aware of the tragic home fire deaths that recently occurred in their

neighborhood, and were motivated to take the necessary precautions to increase their home fire safety measures.

“It was a very good experience to have organizations like the Red Cross and Fire Department to promote this program to seniors,” says Roy Higa. “I feel much safer with the smoke alarms and would recommend this program to others.”

**Help promote fire safety in your community—to learn more, visit [redcross.org/prepare](http://redcross.org/prepare)**



Volunteers bring fire safety home.

### Two more ways you can give to Hawaii Red Cross and help bring comfort and compassion to neighbors in need:

#### Donate your HawaiianMiles to the Hawaii Red Cross

Log onto [hawaiianair.com](http://hawaiianair.com), sign in to your HawaiianMiles portal, and under “Manage My Account,” click on “Donate to Charities.” Choose the American Red Cross, Hawaii Chapter. Click on the “Donate Now” button to donate your HawaiianMiles to us. Hawaiian Airlines will take the total miles donated to the American Red Cross, Hawaii State Chapter and match the donation total up to 500,000 miles.

#### Donate your car (Oahu only)

Donating your vehicle—in any condition—through the American Red Cross Vehicle Donation Program is another great way to help us help others. We accept cars, trucks, vans, motorcycles, boats, and even jet skis. Call 1-855-927-2227 or visit [redcross.org/cardonation](http://redcross.org/cardonation) for more information.

## Hawaii Red Cross Club Matson clean-up

Recently over 130 Hawaii Red Cross Club students from 15 different Oahu high schools spent their Saturday cleaning up Ala Moana Beach Park. Students that participated in this event were from Aiea, IPA, Mililani, Kaimuki, Midpac, Nanakuli, Punahou, Hawaii Baptist Academy, Iolani, Kaiser, Kamehameha, Hawaii Technical Academy, La Pietra, Roosevelt and the Hawaii Chapter Red Cross Club.

The students' dedicated effort towards this clean-up project earned a \$1,000 donation from the Matson Foundation to the Hawaii Red Cross through their Ka Ipu 'Aina project.

In addition, Red Cross Club members on Oahu and Waimea also held a holiday toiletry drive in November at their high schools to benefit local veterans. Mahalo to our hard-working youth Red Cross volunteers, who are helping to spread the Red Cross mission across new generations!

**For more information on joining a Hawaii Red Cross Club or starting a Red Cross Club at your school, email [volunteerpacific@redcross.org](mailto:volunteerpacific@redcross.org)**



*High school students from across the area joined forces to clean up Ala Moana Beach Park.*

## Red Cross keeps military family connected during emergencies

Imagine having a family emergency and not being able to contact your significant other. That's what happened to Jennifer Kirchner while visiting her parents in New York. In the middle of her vacation she received a call that her stepson, Joshua, was hospitalized with newly diagnosed Type 1 diabetes.

"At the time, my husband was deployed in a remote location in Asadabad, Afghanistan and there was no direct way to contact him, nor was there any certainty of when his next phone call might be," recalls Jennifer.



*The Kirchner family is grateful to the fast-acting Red Cross.*

Jennifer was desperate to speak with her husband but didn't have his command point of contacts with her and even if she did, she didn't think that they would respond until Monday. "What I did have was a Red Cross contact card that my husband received in a pre-deployment briefing," says Jennifer. "He told me to keep it in case of an emergency and that the Red Cross would be able to get a message to him wherever he was. I called the number, gave the person who answered as much information as I could and waited."

Jennifer's husband, Mel recalls his Army commander informing him that he was contacted by the Red Cross concerning his son. "Not long after meeting with my commander, I was able to contact my wife and we were able to discuss the situation as a family."

"Because of the Red Cross, we were quickly able to get hold of one another during a family crisis," says Jennifer. "The stress of being separated by so many miles and continents and the thought of one family member having to deal with a problem on their own is overwhelming. Knowing the Red Cross was there to help us connect during this time of need was an immense relief."

**Interested in becoming a Red Cross volunteer? Get more information about opportunities here: [redcross.org/support/volunteer](http://redcross.org/support/volunteer)**

# American Red Cross shows up for a man in need

On a typical Monday night, Ronaldo Tampon, of Waianae, lost his home to a fire. He was home at the time that the fire got out of control, and with the help of his neighbors, was able to escape his burning home safely.

Ronaldo luckily was not critically injured, but he lost all of his personal items including his phone, keys, wallet, critical documents and medications in the fire.

## Responding after the disaster

Oahu Red Cross Disaster Volunteers were there to help Ronaldo replace his personal items, secure temporary housing and obtain financial support for immediate emergency needs such as clothing and food. "The Red Cross was right there with the Fire Department and the ambulance to help me out," says Ronaldo. "I know they help a lot of people who are in situations like mine, where unfortunate things happen."



The scene of Ronaldo's home on the night of the fire.

It's the generosity and support of our donors and volunteers that allow us to respond to disasters like these every 4 days in Hawaii. Your continued commitment enables the Red Cross to show up for families who have lost everything to a home fire or other disaster.

"The Red Cross has been a great help," says Ronaldo. "They are just an awesome organization."

**Help people like Ronaldo rebuild their lives after being struck by tragedy. Visit [redcross.org/support](http://redcross.org/support)**

**A year in review**  
Thank you for your support



more than

**1,220,000**

meals and snacks served



nearly

**855,000**

relief items delivered to individuals and families



nearly

**37,000**

overnight stays provided for people after severe storms, fires and other disasters

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