



American Red Cross
of Greater Chicago

2026 Heroes Breakfast

Event Overview

- The *Heroes Breakfast* is an annual celebration of spirit and community, with more than 800 philanthropic and distinguished guests in attendance. The event honors community members who have demonstrated heroism through extraordinary acts of courage or kindness.
- The 24th annual *Heroes Breakfast* will be held May 6, 2026.
- The nomination deadline is December 31, 2025. Nominees will be notified of status by March 2026.

2026 Heroes Categories:

Blood Services Hero:

- The nominee can be an individual(s) or organization that is involved in activity that creates awareness of the importance of blood donation in the community, helps to ensure a sufficient and safe blood supply is available to those in need, and/or acts as an activist for the blood community at large.

Community Impact Hero:

- The nominee(s) has displayed leadership and commitment to community by making a positive, noticeable and significant impact in our community. The nominee has identified a community need and created a program or service, or ensured access to essential services (could include: food service, postal service, public transportation, janitorial service, etc.) or otherwise took action to address community needs.

Disaster Relief Hero:

- The nominee(s) is an individual who has exhibited heroic efforts in any or all of the areas of Disaster Relief, including preparedness, response or recovery during a natural disaster or emergency situation through mission-driven response assistance to people in need. The nominee has exhibited heroism in response to an emergency situation or is involved in an ongoing commitment to a community that experienced a disaster through an act/s of kindness, courage, or unselfishness in response to an identified need. The eligible nominee must live or work in an eligible Chicagoland county, but could have been deployed elsewhere to assist individuals in need.

Education Hero:

- The nominee(s) has displayed leadership and commitment to their community by making a positive and significant impact, and through their efforts has exhibited heroic efforts to increase access to education. This nominee could be, but not limited to, a practicing teacher, school administrator, day care provider or student organization.

Firefighter Hero:

- The nominee(s) is a professional, reserve or volunteer firefighter, or medical personnel related to the dispatch operations of a fire department. The nominee could have been on- or off-duty at the time of the incident. The situation does not have to be associated with the use of skills directly related to their profession. The nominee either exhibited heroism in their response to an emergency situation or the nominee is involved in an ongoing commitment to the community through an act/s of kindness, courage, or unselfishness in response to an identified need.

Global Citizenship Hero:

- The nominee(s) has volunteered or worked to address the needs of the world's vulnerable and unjustly treated populations by building safer, more resilient communities and providing needed relief. The eligible nominee must live or work in an eligible Chicagoland county, but may have conducted their service locally, nationally and/or internationally to assist the individuals in need.

Healthcare Hero

- The nominee(s) is a licensed and practicing medical professional, medical student or retired medical professional. The nominee could have been on- or off-duty at the time of the incident. The situation does not have to be associated with the use of skills directly related to his/her profession. The nominee either exhibited heroism in their response to an emergency situation, ongoing medical need or ongoing commitment to the community through an act/s of kindness, courage, or unselfishness in response to an identified need.

Law Enforcement Hero:

- The nominee(s) is a professional police officer or related law enforcement official. The nominee could have been on- or off-duty at the time of the incident. The situation does not have to be associated with the use of skills directly related to their profession. The nominee either exhibited heroism in their response to an emergency situation or the nominee is involved in an ongoing situation in which a commitment is made to the community through an act/s of kindness, courage, or unselfishness in response to an identified need.

Lifesaving Rescue Hero:

- The nominee(s) has performed an act of heroism involving an unusual, significant or unexpected incident requiring a courageous or unselfish reaction in a time of need that ultimately was resolved in the saving of another person's life.

Military Hero:

- The nominee(s) is a U.S. service member (active, reserve, and guard), veteran, or military supporter or organization that serves the military community. The nominee could have been on- or off-duty at the time of the heroic event. The situation does not have to be associated with the use of skills directly related to his/her profession. The nominee either exhibited heroism in their response to an emergency situation or the nominee is involved in an ongoing commitment to the community through an act/s of kindness, courage, or unselfishness in response to an identified need.

Social Justice Impact Hero:

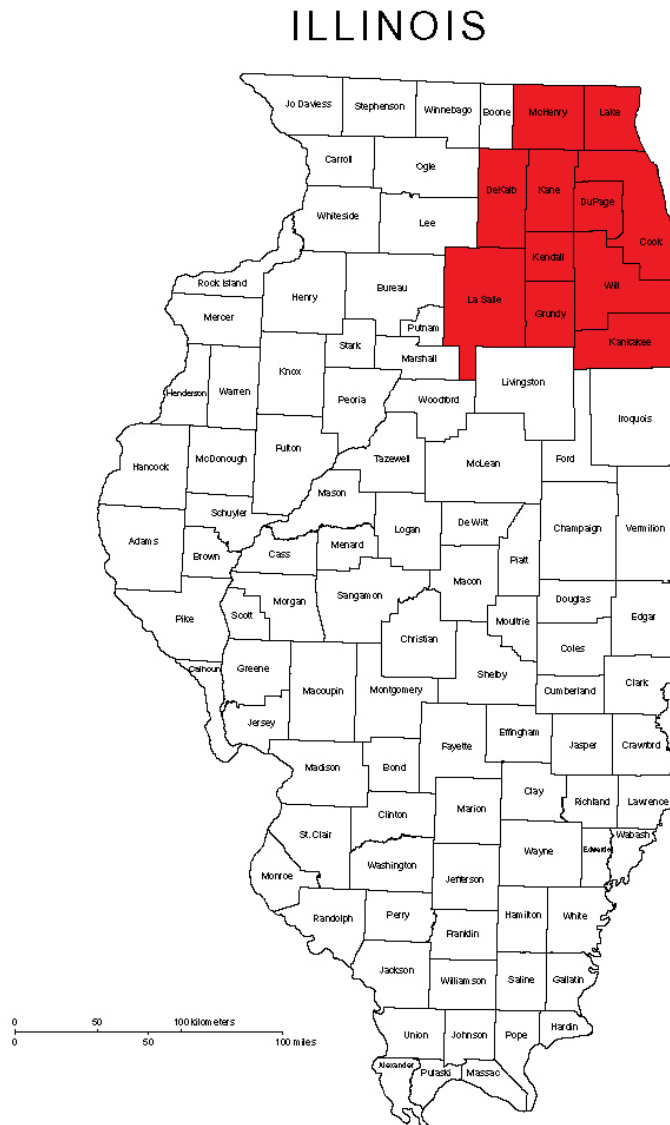
- The nominee(s) has displayed leadership and commitment to their/our community by recognizing a need, making a positive and significant impact through their efforts to propel social change. The nominee values human rights and the dignity of all.

Youth Hero:

- The nominee(s) must be 17 years old or under at the time of the incident or act. The eligible nominee has performed an act of heroism involving an unusual, significant or unexpected incident requiring a courageous or unselfish reaction in a crisis or time of need. The nominee can be involved in an on-going commitment to the community through an act/s of kindness, courage, or unselfishness in response to an identified need.

Eligibility

- Candidates must live or work in Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, LaSalle, Lake, McHenry, or Will counties in Illinois (see map below)
- The heroic act must have taken place during the 2025 calendar year.
- Nominations can be submitted online at redcross.org/hero



Contact Information

For more information about the 2026 *Heroes Breakfast*, please visit redcross.org/hero or contact Illinois.Heroes@redcross.org.