July Edition

American Red Cross

YOUTHWIRE

Impact Starts Here

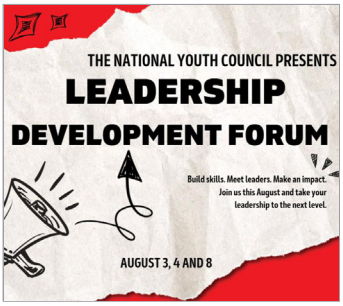
Latest from the National Youth Council



With 2026 already halfway through, the National Youth Council wants to take a moment to celebrate the incredible impact youth volunteers have made so far this year. From receiving over 600 applications for Council membership, raising more than $14,000 through the Miles for Relief Challenge, to over 13,000 of you reading YouthWire each month, these achievements reflect the passion and dedication of youth across the country. Whether you've attended an event, volunteered in your community, led a project, or simply stayed engaged, thank you!

National Youth Council Leadership Development Forum

Build Skills. Meet Leaders. Make an Impact. Launching for the first time this summer, the National Youth Leadership Forum is a virtual professional development series created by the National Youth Council for Red Cross youth and young adult volunteers who want to grow as leaders.



Through three interactive sessions, participants will explore:

- **Team Collaboration** (Mon., Aug. 3): Work effectively with people from different backgrounds, navigate challenges, and build stronger teams.
- **Project Management** (Tues., Aug. 4): Plan successful events and initiatives, manage time, set goals, and measure impact.
- **Network & Learn** (Sat., Aug. 8): Build meaningful professional connections, communicate with confidence, and learn from the experiences of other Red Cross leaders and volunteers.

Whether you lead a Red Cross Club, support regional initiatives, or are looking for your next opportunity to grow, this forum will give you practical skills you can apply in the Red Cross, at school, and beyond.

Connect with volunteers nationwide. Strengthen your leadership.

Meet Our New Chair Aparnaa Ananthakrishnan



Please join us in welcoming our 2026–2028 National Youth Council Chair and the 2025 Honoree of the Navin Narayan National Award for Excellence in Youth Leadership! Aparnaa Ananthakrishnan is a recent graduate of Northwestern University, where she earned a BA in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Biochemistry & Biophysics and Global Health Studies.

Aparnaa previously served as President of Northwestern's Red Cross Club and as the FY24 National Collegiate Officer for the North Central Division, where she spearheaded an annual Spring Collegiate Blood Drives Campaign mobilizing Red Cross Clubs across nine Midwestern states to increase both participation and diversity in blood donation. In recognition of her leadership and impact, Aparnaa received the FY25 Illinois Red Cross Blood Services Hero Award and the FY25 Navin Narayan National Award for Excellence in Youth Leadership. She currently serves on the National Youth Council as a Youth and Young Adult Ambassador Program Lead, mentoring ambassadors in the development and execution of regional service projects.

As the 2026–2028 Chair of the National Youth Council, Aparnaa is excited to continue advancing the Red Cross mission by shaping meaningful experiences for youth and young adult volunteers while inspiring greater engagement in all five Red Cross lines of service nationwide.

Plastic Free July

Plastic Free July is a global movement that started to reduce and solve plastic pollution. Did you know that the American Red Cross and the University of Missouri helped prevent the use of more than 5,000 single-use plastic water bottles during a September 2025 blood drive?

Throughout the four-day event, students, staff, and volunteers brought reusable water bottles, making a meaningful impact on waste reduction.



Check out these great ideas to implement in your lives and encourage those around you to focus on sustainability:

- Make your favorite drinks at home instead of buying bottled or disposable beverages.
- Host a plastic-free picnic using reusable or homemade food, drinks and decor.
- Host clothing swaps instead of shopping for new outfits.
- Try a “No Plastic Packaging” grocery challenge with bulk foods and fresh produce.
- Try a “No Takeout Containers” month by cooking at home or bringing reusable containers for takeout and leftovers.

Expand Your Knowledge: World Youth Skills Day

World Youth Skills Day is a reminder of the importance of learning, growing, and developing the skills that help young people become future leaders. From communication and teamwork to leadership and community engagement, every new experience creates opportunities for personal and professional growth.



The American Red Cross provides countless ways for youth volunteers to expand their knowledge while making a meaningful impact in their communities. **Take a class** with the Red Cross and learn something new this summer!

2026 Navin Narayan Scholarship Recipients

Navin Narayan was a high-achieving student, Rhodes Scholar, and Harvard graduate, as well as a dedicated, compassionate, and innovative American Red Cross volunteer who previously served as National Youth Council Chair. Tragically, at the age of 23, Navin succumbed to cancer. Since 2001, the National Youth Council has continued Navin Narayan’s legacy of volunteerism and academic excellence by awarding the Navin Narayan Scholarship to high school seniors who embody his principles.

We are excited to announce our two 2026 scholarship recipients!

Ayu Kira
Cascades Region



Ayu organized multiple blood drives that collected over 150 units, developed regional resources that reached more than 1,000 community members, and strengthened engagement across a network of 2,600 youth volunteers. Ayu will be attending Stanford University this fall.

What sets Ayu apart is her commitment to understanding the “why” behind her service. After witnessing a student being deferred from donating due to low hemoglobin, she took the initiative to learn the science behind anemia. This knowledge informed her educational campaigns and blood drive efforts, including preparing students to donate successfully. Her experience volunteering in a hospital oncology unit further deepened her interest in cancer biology and reinforced her understanding of the critical role blood donation plays in patient care.

Mingfei Shuai
Central and Southern Ohio Region



As the founder and president of her school’s Red Cross club, Mingfei engaged more than 100 students through blood drives, CPR and first aid trainings, and accessible service opportunities that lower barriers to participation. Mingfei will be attending the University of California, Los Angeles this fall.

Mingfei also served as the Youth Engagement Lead and Service to the Armed Forces Volunteer Recognition Lead for her region, where she strengthened collaboration, improved volunteer systems, and supported a network of more than 200 volunteers. Her work reflected a deep understanding that impactful service is not only about individual contributions, but also about empowering others to take collective action.

Other Youth and Young Adult Stories

- **Elementary students across Florida are learning lifesaving water safety skills thanks to Red Cross youth volunteers bringing the WHALE Tales program into classrooms.**
- **Through her Red Cross volunteer service, teenager Hannah Kirksey discovered a passion for medicine and a future dedicated to helping others.**
- **After surviving a life-changing car accident, Reziel Alarcon found purpose through Red Cross volunteer service, inspiring her entire family to give back alongside her.**

WHAT IS YOUTHWIRE?

Created by your National Youth Council, YouthWire is a monthly e-newsletter containing important Red Cross youth volunteer opportunities, stories and resources for youth, young adults and youth champions! We always want to highlight great stories and hear what awesome things are happening in your region!

Let us know what's new for you!
Questions about youth volunteering with the American Red Cross? Email YouthInvolvement@redcross.org.

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Click here to unsubscribe from our list, but please know that if you leave, it will be harder for you to stay involved with the Red Cross and continue the work of which you've been such a critical part. It is only because of supporters like you that the Red Cross is able to respond when a disaster strikes or a home is impacted by fire, when someone needs CPR or a lifesaving blood transfusion, or when a family needs to contact a deployed service member in an emergency. And we don't want to lose you! Thanks for your support!

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Help ensure that the life-saving gift of blood and blood products will be available and as safe as possible whenever and wherever it is needed.

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