Red Cross items filling VA shelves

A Montana Red Cross team recently delivered nearly 800 items to the VA Medical Center at Fort Harrison in Helena, giving a boost to programs that support veterans in need across the state.

And it couldn’t have come at a better time. “Especially right now during COVID, a lot of our volunteer and donation numbers are down so it’s going to help sustain these programs for the upcoming months,” said Amy Claridge, the Montana VA’s acting chief of voluntary service.

“It’s beyond measure.” Purchased by the Red Cross through a Department of Defense grant, these items bolster the VA’s recreational therapy program, women’s health program and homeless veterans program, and will help those living at the VA’s Freedoms Path housing unit. Together, the items totalled about $3,400.

The women’s health program received socks and toiletries and goodies like baby shampoo and lotion they can include in a baby cart to support parents. Wood and leathercraft kits and puzzle books will go to veterans taking part in the recreation therapy program. And cooking, canning and juicing items will be used in conjunction with the VA’s community gardening program, as the vets learn to grow produce and turn it into healthy meals.

“When they can learn to grow a garden and preserve those items and use them throughout the year…skills like that are so important,” Claridge said. “You’re really touching people’s lives — and not only the veterans — but in some instances it could also be their spouse or children.”

Socks, gloves, hats and toiletries support homeless veterans and the VA’s in-patient clients as well.

“A sweatshirt or a pair of pants that are going to keep you warm, that’s huge,” Claridge said. “Small items people often take for granted can make the world to our vets in these situations.”

Service to the Armed Forces VA volunteer Sue Hawthorne, Montana Red Cross board member Randi Heigh and Service to the Armed Forces Program Manager Sara Cease delivered the items to Fort Harrison in early March. And many of those items are already in veterans’ hands.

“It’s an amazing opportunity to be able to support the VA and provide things that make a veteran’s life more enjoyable and give more comfort and care,” Cease said.

SEE VETERANS, PAGE 2

Recipients stories move donor

In 1998, Patti Dorlarque was on her way home in Columbia Falls when she noticed a Red Cross blood drive. Diabetic, Patti didn’t think she was able to donate but decided to stop in anyway to find out. It turned out she was eligible, jump-starting a two-decade tradition that has helped countless patients in need of lifesaving blood.

In November, Patti received her prestigious 10-gallon pin. Her blood has gone to medical facilities across the country and Montana including a couple of children’s hospitals. She keeps all the letters she receives from Red Cross telling her where her donation is being used.

The first letter Patti received let her know her donation went to someone at the hospital in Shelby, the community where she was born and raised.

“My chest just explodes, my chest just explodes,” Patti said of the feeling she gets each time another Red Cross letter arrives. “I just love it. It makes me feel so good and so proud that I’m able to do that and help other people.”

Patti says she donates every other year.
RED ALERTS!

Great work-from-home job offered. Approximate time commitment: 2 hours per week, though variations can be expected.

HELP NEEDED MONITORING CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: Red Crossers! Are you seeking a virtual engagement job that you can do from home? If so, the compliance and monitoring team needs your support in providing program oversight. Please consider these positions.

Compliance reviewer

All financial assistance cases require a background check process to ensure they align with Red Cross standards. Compliance reviewers go over our cases and ensure we’re meeting our obligations. Approximate time commitment: 1-2 hours per week, though variations can be expected.

ID/Address document reviewer

In providing financial assistance, we must establish the client is who they say they are and live at the disaster-affected residence. This step helps us build good stewards of resources and ensures that assistance is directed to those who need it most. The ID/address document reviewer provides a second set of eyes on uploaded documents such as driver’s licenses and utility bills, and confirms they meet our standards. Approximate time commitment: 2-4 hours per week.

Event reviewer

In situations where there are not two Red Cross responders to verify an event occurred, such as a single-family home fire, the event reviewer uses alternate methods to obtain event confirmation. This may include locating and documenting information about the event in traditional media or contacting a fire department or local emergency official to obtain details. This step protects the integrity of our work by demonstrating that an event actually happened and, by extension, assistance was properly offered. Approximate time commitment: 2-4 hours per week.

POSITION HIGHLIGHT: DUTY OFFICER: Are you organized and flexible, and do you like to talk on the phone? If so, you could be responsible for initiating assistance during times of disaster. You need us as a duty officer. A duty officer is the lynchpin of a Red Cross disaster response. These volunteers receive notification from clients and agencies requesting assistance during a fire, flood, or other disaster. They assess the situation and deploy resources to support efforts such as initial case-work, sheltering, disaster assessment and recovery planning.

Location: Virtual/Work from home.

Volunteer Responsibilities:
• Complete training
• Have a computer with reliable internet service and a phone.
• Be-on-call during selected shifts
• Dispatch Disaster Action Team

Time commitment:
• Full-time: Nine 6-hour shifts/month
• Part-time: One 6-hour shift/week

DEPLOYMENT AVAILABILITY:
We are anticipating a very busy deployment season. Please update your availability.

DONATIONS. See instructions, page 9. I want to donate to:
33. Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund …….
35. Special Olympics Idaho ……………………..
37. American Red Cross of Idaho Fund ………….
39. Idaho Foodbank Fund ………………………
41. TOTAL TAX PLUS DONATIONS. Add lines 32 through 40

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VETERANS: Warm clothing, therapy tools

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Red Cross has a long history of supporting service members and their families here in Montana and across the globe.

Last year, the Red Cross provided services and care to nearly 1,200 Montana military families. That includes helping military members and their families and women return home for a major event like a funeral or the birth of a child and

Giving families the skills they need to cope with the stress and uncertainty that comes with a deployment.

And just as importantly, the Red Cross also supports VAs and our veteran community. “We would like to thank the American Red Cross,” Claridge said. “They’re just great people with positive attitudes. We appreciate all the efforts that go into getting the grant. These are probably the best veterans and their families.”

— Story by Matt Ochsner

DOCTOR: Enjoying Red Cross interactions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

month “like clockwork” and enjoys meeting other donors and talking with the Red Cross staff.

“I feel like a little kid sometimes because you get the badge to put on that says when your appointment is and I wear that all day because I’m proud of that,” she said.

— Story by Matt Ochsner

Two every seconds, someone in the United States needs blood including cancer patients, accident victims, expecting mothers and those undergoing surgery.

Schedule an appointment today to donate, or search for a blood drive near you by visiting our Web site, RedCrossBlood.org.

You may also call 800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

The donation process takes about an hour from start to finish and just might save a life.