

RED ALERTS!



Keeping our volunteer partners engaged and informed



ON THE HORIZON

- March is National Red Cross Month.
- Red Cross Giving Day, March 27.
- Sound the Alarm Nampa smoke alarm installation event, April 26-27. Look for more information next month about how to volunteer.



The Idaho Montana Training Institute has reached capacity. For more information about how to add yourself to the waiting list, please email IDMTinstitute@redcross.org.



MILESTONES

- CINDY BENDER, 15 years
- KIM ACKLEY BILLS, 10 years
- SHAYNE HOLMES, 5 years
- SEAN LORIA, 5 years
- KARI MARTELL, 5 years
- WENDY PEREZ, 5 years
- MARILEE POSPAHALA, 5 years
- LINDA RAINE, 5 years
- SHELLEY ROCKNE, 5 years



Connor, a Lakeside Elementary fifth-grader, plays chocolate Bingo as he learns about disaster preparedness during a Montana Red Cross Pillowcase presentation in February.

Red Cross in the classroom

Students learn about importance of blood donation, readiness in case of emergency

On a recent February afternoon, 24 fifth-graders at Lakeside Elementary School in Flathead County in northwestern Montana gathered to learn about two American Red Cross programs that could help save their lives and the lives of their families.

As part of the Pint-Sized Hero program, Red Cross Donor Recruitment Representative Sandy Carlson talked to the students about the importance of blood donations and enlisted their help sharing this information with adults.

Afterwards, Red Cross volunteers and retired teachers, Jetta Johnson of Bigfork

Interested in being a Pillowcase volunteer?

To learn more about becoming a Pillowcase presenter, call 208-258-0592 or email idmt.recruiting@redcross.org. Presenters are currently needed in the Missoula and Butte areas.

and Sherry Baker of Kalispell, showed the class how to prepare for disasters such as a home fire or flood and create an emergency kit.

Pint-size heroes

Developed by the Red Cross, the Pint-

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Jetta Johnson, who retired after 30 years as a teacher and superintendent, feels right at home teaching Flathead Valley students about how to be prepared for a disaster.

Learn new skills with these resources

As you continue on your journey, the Red Cross reminds volunteers that the organization truly wants to support your interests, passions and lifelong learning as you serve your local and national communities.

The Red Cross offers a great set of free development resources providing ways volunteers can embrace new skills through profes-

sional development.

Within EDGE, employees and volunteers have access to an eLearning library, which includes courses, videos, books and more. The American Red Cross provides this professional development resource through its partnership with Skillsoft.

Please check out these great

resources by visiting americanredcross.skillport.com/skillportfe/login.action

Also find a guide that helps navigate the professional development portal.

Thanks so much for all you do for our communities and neighbors. You are the power and the heart of the American Red Cross!



Sandy Carlson rolls out her supplies to teach a fifth-grade class about donating blood through the Red Cross.

Classroom: Coping skills

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Size Hero Program teaches students in kindergarten through the fifth grade blood basics. Carlson hung colorful posters at the front of the Lakeside Elementary classroom illustrating red blood cells, plasma and platelets.

She began by promising students they wouldn't see any real blood and served red Kool-Aid representing the parts found in blood. She also engaged students in question-and-answer discussions about what blood is, why it's important, who needs blood and why it's critical that adults donate.

The wide-eyed students were surprised to learn that in Montana, someone needs donated blood every 27 minutes. In the United States, it's every 2 seconds.

Carlson explained the goal of the Pint-Size Hero Program is to engage elementary school students, faculty and parents in the blood donation process, whether it's sponsoring a blood drive or making a donation.

Pillowcase Project

Johnson and Baker, who volunteer regularly with the Red Cross, then presented an interactive preparedness program to Sara Walters' fifth-grade students that increased their awareness of natural hazards that occur in the Flathead area.

The Red Cross implemented it in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It's now the organization's signature youth preparedness program and is available throughout the country, teaching youth in grades three through five the best ways to stay safe and helping them create their own emergency supply kits by packing essential items in a pillowcase for easy transport during a disaster.

After the Pillowcase training, students are empowered to share experiences, fears and solutions with others in their family, Johnson said. These teachings are beneficial communitywide as well, because forest fires and floods are very real threats in the region.

In Lakeside, the educators also teach about home fires and the need for smoke alarms and developing an emergency exit plan.

Johnson received a "whoa" from the class when she shared that the Red Cross responds to a home fire every eight minutes.

Because each student brings home a decorated pillowcase, there is



Retired teacher and current Red Cross volunteer Sherry Baker, of Kalispell, displays the essentials of a disaster preparedness kit.

“
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”

ample time to discuss emergencies with family members as they gather items for their emergency kit.

The project includes ways students can work through their emotions during and after a disaster and tips for coping with fear and stress. They learned to slowly breathe in while imagining the air as a favorite color. When exhaling, the focus would be on gray, or unwanted, thoughts.

To keep learning fun, the Red Cross volunteers included a Bingo game with M&M place markers. Each square included a word or phrase discussed during the teachers' presentation.

“Hopefully they feel empowered to share what they've learned with friends and family,” Johnson said.

Never done educating

When Johnson received her bachelor's degree in elementary education back in 1963, she didn't foresee spending her retirement teaching young learners about blood and disasters.

Yet, that is what her volunteer days around her home base near

Bigfork have brought her.

The talented and enthusiastic educator regularly dons her Red Cross volunteer vest and visits regional classrooms and community groups to teach some of the Red Cross' most successful programs.

At the beginning of her career, she taught in Great Falls, Browning and Cut Bank, and after leaving the classroom, became the Glacier County superintendent of schools.

Johnson is a disaster response, blood drive and educational volunteer who is happy to share her time and tales of the subtle rewards she receives being back in the classroom.

“I just really like to be with the kids,” Johnson said.

She tells about one experience that embedded itself in her memory, and her heart.

While leading a presentation for a community group of young elementary students, she saw one boy sitting by himself, perhaps not understanding a complex topic about blood donation and disasters.

She remembers another young boy approaching the timid learner, and reaching out to say, “This isn't going to hurt. It is going to be really great,” the student said.

“It was great for me because I got to see one child help another child,” Johnson added.

Johnson urges other working educators to incorporate the Pillowcase Project into their classrooms. Teachers can contact the Red Cross at 800-272-6668 to find out about scheduling a Pillowcase Project presentation.

— Story and photos by writing team volunteer Amy Joyner