

# RED ALERTS!

Keeping our valued Red Cross volunteers engaged and informed



## ON THE HORIZON

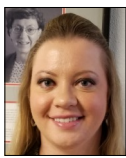
■ **Sound the Alarm Nampa** smoke alarm installation event, April 26-27.

■ **Sound the Alarm Helena**, May 3-4.

■ **Sound the Alarm Billings**, May 11.

Read more about these events and how to volunteer on page 2.

## MEET A LEADER



**JENNIFER SONNICHSEN**, engagement lead communications, Bozeman

I have been with the Red Cross for over 10 years and understand the importance of getting our story out to the communities we serve.

With two small children, I enjoy being able to support the communications team from my home.

**FUN FACT:** In my spare time, I play in a community handbell choir and dance with a local hula studio.



**30**

Disaster responses in February. Families helped: 53.



John Schlichenmayer is a Disaster Action Team volunteer in Butte, where he helps families get back on their feet following disasters like home fires. "I've been helping people since I was a kid," he said.

## Stepping up to fill a hometown need

*Butte native saw opportunity for better disaster response in his community and decided to roll up his sleeves; now he's urging others to do the same*

**W**hen John Schlichenmayer moved back to his hometown of Butte six years ago, he noticed that when disaster struck — typically a house fire — there wasn't always a quick community response.

He was particularly clued into this need after living in Portland and getting involved in emergency response teams that served the poor and homeless there. Schlichenmayer, who manages a Town Pump carwash in Butte, said he spoke with the local disaster and emergency services coordinator for the Butte-Silver Bow area about what he could do.

"I've been helping people since I was a kid," he said. "And I've had my bumps along the way."

Schlichenmayer visited the American Red Cross website and signed up to be a Disaster Action Team volunteer.

### Interested in becoming a disaster volunteer?

Red Cross is currently recruiting for more Disaster Action Team volunteers, especially in the Butte area. Visit [montanaredcross.org](http://montanaredcross.org), email [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org) or call 208-258-0592 to learn more.

For him it's meant responding to local fires and helping families sort things out and begin the process of getting back on their feet when all seems lost.

"It can be rewarding, and it can be very emotional at times," he said.

One home fire response sticks with Schlichenmayer. About three years ago, a Whitehall family of six lost their home in a fire. Schlichenmayer received a call from their pastor and was able to help them find a motel and give them the support and services they needed during an extremely difficult time.

That family has since moved to Butte, and

SEE NEED, PAGE 2

## Koenig takes new position; Islas joins team

Ted Koenig is the new regional disaster officer for the American Red Cross of Idaho and Montana.

His mission is coordinating the Red Cross's response to home fires, wildfires and floods across an area including more than 230,000 square miles and home to nearly three million



Koenig

people. Koenig's new role is "all about building capacity, sustaining the workforce we have and making sure we're the volunteer organization of choice," he said.

"We're doubling down on making the volunteer experience one people talk about and want to be part of, which helps us regardless of the

immense geography we face."

He works on strengthening ties with partner agencies, state agencies and nongovernmental organizations that align with the Red Cross mission.

And his primary mission is to support disaster response staff across the region as they build and sustain capacity.

SEE TEAM, PAGE 2



**MILESTONES**

**PHIL HINSHAW,**  
10 years

**PAULA CHAUSS,**  
5 years



**28**

Volunteers joined us in February.



**NEW APP COMING**

**THE RCVIEW**

Disaster Action Team dispatch app will offer a new way to sign up for shifts and be assigned as a DAT responder. More details to come at upcoming DAT meetings.



**PILLOWCASE PROJECT** is an emergency preparedness program for third- through fifth-graders. Volunteers go into classrooms and work with students. Presenters are needed in: **Boise, Lewiston, Butte and Missoula.** More locations pending. Please call 208-258-0592 to learn more.



**4,034**

Hours logged in February by our volunteers.

## Help install smoke alarms in Idaho, Montana homes

The Idaho Red Cross and its community partners hope to install 600 free smoke alarms in Nampa homes in April and are looking for volunteers to help.

Volunteers will go door-to-door in Nampa neighborhoods April 26-27, installing free alarms and educating families about fire safety. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days, and training and lunch will be provided. About 170 volunteers will be needed.

Red Cross is partnering with the Nampa Fire Department, the City of Nampa, the Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Consulate of Mexico in Boise and the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho during this year's installation event, which will occur rain or shine.

Volunteers are welcome to take part one or both days. Spanish-speaking volunteers are needed.

To register, please visit [redcross.org/nampa](http://redcross.org/nampa). The Montana Red Cross and its partners will install free alarms in Helena neighborhoods and teach families about fire safety from 2 to 5 p.m.

May 3 and from 9 a.m. until noon on May 4. On May 11 from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Montana Red Cross will install alarms in Billings homes.

To register to volunteer for either or both days in Helena or for the Billings event visit [www.redcross.org/montana](http://www.redcross.org/montana).

Home fires are the nation's most frequent disaster and account for the vast majority of Red Cross disaster responses each year. In 2018 alone, the Red Cross responded to 60,000 home fires, providing emotional support for affected families, help securing a safe place to stay and assistance with urgent recovery needs.

On average, families have less than two minutes to escape during a fire so working smoke alarms can make all the difference.

If you have questions about volunteering or forming a volunteer team in Nampa, call Danielle Pozernick at 208-258-0592.

For questions about the Helena event, call Ted Koenig at 406-360-0647. Call Abbra Firman at 406-210-8286 with questions about the Billings installations.

## Team: Philanthropy officer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"That could be helping them work through an issue or being on the ground for an event," he said. "It's being their advocate and allowing them to be the best advocates for their workforce."

In the past five years, the Red Cross has made major gains in standardizing disaster responses across the country, and Koenig said that will continue to be important.

When Koenig returned to the United States after serving in the Peace Corps in Madagascar, he wanted to find a meaningful career in his hometown of Kalispell. He leapt at an opening with the Red Cross as disaster program manager for western Montana.

Koenig said he has learned to "share the heart our volunteers and workforce have for the people we serve," he said.

He will continue to be based in Kalispell.

Koenig takes over for Colleen Tone, who was promoted to North Central Division disaster director.

Koenig said in particular he plans to continue Tone's efforts to "push power to the edges."

"With a limited footprint for staff across the two-state region, we have to push capacity into the volunteer workforce, truly letting that workforce be the face of Red Cross." Nicole Sirak Irwin, regional CEO, said Koenig has thoughtful ideas about teamwork and collaboration across the region.

"Ted brings long-range strategic planning and sustainable growth ideas to our region with an eye toward continuing the success our teams achieve on many levels," she said.

**Islas joins fundraising team**

Luis Islas, formerly of the Idaho Foodbank in

Boise, is the Red Cross of Idaho and Montana's new regional philanthropy officer.

"Luis has shown exceptional confidence and ability in fundraising," said Bryce Sitter, chief development officer for Idaho and Montana. "He's quickly grasped the Red Cross programs and is building relationships, which will ultimately help to secure resources for this important mission."



Islas

Islas has had a passion for service work since he served as a Peace Corps education volunteer in Madagascar. During his time there, his projects ranged from malaria awareness and prevention, to a regional project called Hearts to Androy,

which worked to gather books from all over the world to service one of the region's only libraries.

His passion has since transitioned into the nonprofit sector domestically beginning with Idaho Foodbank, first as an AmeriCorps VISTA member focusing on volunteer recruitment and retention, and then as the development coordinator.

He has a master's degree in business leadership from William Penn University, where he served as a graduate research assistant and was a triple major during his undergraduate studies in political science, history and prelaw.

Islas was heavily involved in the community and on campus serving as the president of numerous organizations and being named both the Young Leader of the Year as well as the Sophomore of the Year.

— Story by Red Cross writing team volunteer Kristen Inbody

## Need: Become a disaster volunteer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Schlichenmayer says he sees them about once a month.

"He's basically just like a friend now," Schlichenmayer said.

Typically, people are willing to take in those impacted by disaster for a night, maybe two. But when there are multiple people involved it becomes more difficult, Schlichenmayer said.

What he appreciates most about the Red Cross is how it provides help regardless of a person's marital status, age, religious beliefs, etc.

"The Red Cross is a humanitarian organization," he said.

March is national Red Cross month and the Montana Red Cross is currently recruiting more disaster action team volunteers, especially in the Butte area. If you're interested in becoming a Red Cross Disaster Action Team volunteer

or know someone who is, go to [montanaredcross.org](http://montanaredcross.org), email [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org) or call 208-258-0592.

Helping people in need is and should be the Butte way, Schlichenmayer said.

"It's neighbor helping neighbor," he said. "It's the way we grew up and the way we should always be."

— Story by Red Cross writing team volunteer Kristen Caldwell