

RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



ON THE HORIZON

■ [International Day of the World's Indigenous People](#), Aug. 9.

■ [International Youth Day](#), Aug. 12.

■ [National Non-profit Day](#), Aug. 17



36

Disaster responses in July.

Clients helped: **111**



MILESTONES

August

DEBORAH MAHLER, 15 years

WYAN MILLS, 5 years

BRADLEY ROBERTS, 5 years

CRAIG STAHLBERG, 5 years

KANDI STARNES, 5 years

MICHELLE SUSANEN, 5 years.

TIFFANY TRAN, 5 years



Tobie Weist, a Red Crosser since 2000, recently won an award for volunteerism, the Lyle Heath Community Service Award in Missoula. Tobie has helped people across the globe.

Global experience handy in disasters

Skills dovetail with needs in shelters

Retired University of Montana professor Katherine “Tobie” Weist has spent much of her life helping others, whether overseas, across the country or near her home in Missoula.

The 84-year-old great-grandmother has spent time everywhere from South Africa and South Korea to the Republic of Georgia and Botswana. As a Red Cross volunteer since 2000, she’s also helped people closer to home as a greeter at blood drives and as a pillowcase presenter, visiting elementary schools and teaching students how to prepare for a disaster.

But some of her most impactful volunteerism has come as a Red Cross disaster responder, working at emergency shelters in Western

Montana and as far away as Louisiana. Earlier this summer, the Missoula Sentinel Kiwanis Club presented Tobie with the Lyle Heath Community Service Recognition Award, which recognizes a local volunteer who unselfishly donates time to area nonprofits.

A native of Ohio, the former Midwest farm girl came to Missoula in 1969 after being hired at the University of Montana as an anthropology instructor. In 1970, she earned her PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of California Berkeley and became a full-time professor.

Tobie taught at the UM campus for 30 years, often taking overseas teaching assign-

SEE TOBIE, PAGE 3



While Hank Nowak was deployed to help with wildfires in Oregon, he learned a fire was burning near his Montana home.

Disaster worker gets bad news while away

Note: This story was written by Darrell Fuller of the Red Cross Cascades Region

Hank Nowak of Joliet (about 30 miles outside Billings) flew to Medford, Ore., in July to serve as a Red Cross shelter volunteer for the Bootleg Fire burning in Oregon.

He had no way of knowing, of course, that one week into his assignment his own home in Montana would be threatened by the Harris Fire.

SEE DISASTER, PAGE 2

Experienced hand joins team



Joaquin

Joaquin Lemus has been selected as the fleet coordinator II for the Idaho Montana Fleet/Facilities Operations Team.

Joaquin (pronounced wah KEEN) is based in Boise and has an office in the Red Cross warehouse.

He brings to our organization 11 years experience in biomed phlebotomy as a CDL driver, trainer and team leader.

Joaquin is a Treasure Valley native and enjoys golf, billiards and his family.

The best way to reach Joaquin is via email at joaquin.lemus@redcross.org.

His supervisors appreciate his enthusiasm and interest in learning new skills in fleet and facilities.

Congratulations to Joaquin on his new position.

Duty officers vital to response

Our volunteers can select the kind of work they do at the Red Cross, and keeping apprised of what is available can help you find the best fit. Also, join fellow volunteers for virtual social time, and discover what is new in volunteer learning resources.

VOLUNTEER DISASTER COORDINATOR. Duty Officer volunteers play a key role in disaster response and client service delivery.

These volunteers work from home to answer the initial phone call for temporary assistance and collect basic situational information.

Duty Officers assess the situation and deploy the most appropriate resources to support efforts such as casework, sheltering, disaster assessment and recovery planning.

Location: Virtual

Volunteer responsibilities:

- Communicate in a professional manner with diverse populations.
- Zero-to-Hero training provided! Complete online and with supervisor.
- Have a computer with reliable internet service and a phone.
- Be on-call during selected shifts.
- Provide leadership and guidance during local disasters.
- Dispatch Disaster Action Team volunteers to initialize a disaster or emergency response.

Time commitment:

Full-time: Nine 6-hour shifts per month

Part-time: One 6-hour shift per week

Preferred length of commitment (after training) is at least six months, and a year is greatly appreciated.

Want to add this position to your volunteer profile? Do you know someone that would be a great fit? Contact Gini at IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or by phone/text at 406-493-8778 for more information.

Disaster: Man trusts Red Cross to have his back

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But let's not get ahead of ourselves ...

Hank Nowak, who turned 77 at the end of July, retired from a career in facilities planning and construction with the US Postal Service. But Hank wasn't ready to slow down.

He drove for the VA until he turned 70, and then they wouldn't let him drive any more.

"I saw there was a bunch of flooding in the Dakotas," Hank said. He thought to himself, "I could go and hand out food in the shelters." The Red Cross was a perfect fit.

Hank works in shelters, helping those displaced from their homes.

"I help out where I can," he says quietly, downplaying his contributions. "I'm a utility player.

"I never realized how extensive the Red Cross was before I started volunteering. It's just amazing."

But back to our story ...

About seven days into his two-week assignment, Hank got a call from his wife, Elaine. She said, "I think we have a problem here," and texted him a photo from their backyard.

"It was a plume of smoke just like we're having here in Klamath Falls," Hank explains.

That call was followed closely by another one from his adult son, Daniel, and another texted photo.

"The sheriff came by while I was talking to Elaine. He said we should start thinking about getting out. My wife and our dogs have moved down the road with our son." (Daniel lives just a quarter of a mile from his parents.)

He's since talked to his local Red Cross chapter about the situation.

"The Red Cross in Montana has a shelter on standby. The fire is moving away from residences right now. It's mostly scrub brush and grazing lands," he says.

"I'd like to stick it out here in Klamath Falls," Hank said. "I don't want to leave early. My wife and son will call me. The sheriff will call me. My local volunteers will call me if it gets bad. They know I'm out here. They all feel there is no rush to get back. And I know the Red Cross would work hard to get me back home quickly if necessary."

So, Hank finished his deployment to Klamath Falls, serving Oregonians who have been evacuated from the Bootleg Fire.

It's the Red Cross way.

IN THE KNOW



RED CROSS NEWS & HAPPENINGS

KETCHUP WITH FRIENDS 2.0.

Our social time together just gets better and better. At our July meeting, EVERYONE won! The following volunteers won a Red Cross neckerchief: John



McGrew, Ernie Lytle, Scott Fairfield and Christine Stinson.

Please join us in August. Remember, no agenda, no training. Just fun times with all lines of service

volunteers. In August, the door prize will be a Red Cross chapstick. You must come to win. The meeting is Aug. 10 from 7:30-8 p.m.

Join us using your computer or mobile app.

Click [here](#) to join the meeting of Ketchup With Friends 2.0

If you are interested in helping plan events like this, we would love to have more event team members.

To join the Virtual Event Team, please contact Nate Gilbert (Nathan.Gilbert@redcross.org)

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

Volunteer Services is excited to announce that Red Cross volunteers now can access thousands of learning resources.

Volunteer Services recently arranged with Percipio to offer the expanded professional development resources. Using Percipio, volunteers can watch, read or listen to 2,000 courses, 12,000 books and audio books and thousands of videos.

You can access Percipio through EDGE by clicking the Percipio icon on the EDGE home page. **Important!** Percipio does NOT replace EDGE. It


replaces the Volunteer Professional Development Portal (PDP), which was retired earlier this year.

The Red Cross is committed to investing in and supporting volunteer professional development. Volunteers are encouraged to take advantage of this engaging and flexible learning resource as part of continued growth.

"Percipio is an amazing resource," said Matt Bertram, vice president of Volunteer Services. "Through its expansive and easy-to-use learning library, Volunteer Services can better support the development of our volunteers. I am thankful for all the hard work, dedication and passion that fueled this project."

The roll-out began in July. Here is what volunteers need to know.

- Volunteers with the following Volunteer Connection statuses will have access: Biomed Event-Based Volunteers, General Partner Members, General Volunteers, RWTC, Youth Under 18, and Disaster Expanded Capacity (once fully launched)
- New volunteers will be added weekly until the automated feed is set up (estimated early September)
- Language will be posted to the EDGE page to educate new volunteers that there may be a delay in gaining access to Percipio.
- Volunteers can access Percipio through EDGE



Get started by watching the Percipio Quick Tour, a 5-minute tutorial of the learning platform.

Tobie: Harrowing work

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ments as well, before retiring in 2000 as a professor emeritus.

With a lifetime of worldwide experience, Tobie admits she initially was a bit bored in retirement.

“I retired and was torn, wandering about, wondering what to do with myself,” she remembers.

But that changed when her Red Cross calling was literally sparked by a forest fire. In the summer of 2000, a wildfire in the Bitterroot Valley jump-started her service with the humanitarian organization.

“I went to the Red Cross command center in Missoula to help take in monetary donations, and food and clothing—even horse feed,” she said.

That fire was one of the biggest in the country that year, with Red Cross leaders coming in from Washington, D.C., and beyond.

During that response, Tobie learned about what goes into providing care and comfort during a disaster. She took what she absorbed there to South Africa in 2001 as a member of the Peace Corps. Her in-depth work as a Social Anthropology professor also came in handy because she had lived in three African countries while teaching.

“(International experience) allows you to respect a lot of things, certainly many cultures and languages,” she said. “You get used to different things happening, like riding in rumbly buses filled with people and animals.

“It is easier to enter into a disaster situation and not be freaked out. You cannot depend on the old ways of doing things. You have to adapt and make it a better situation.”

Tobie also spent time in the Republic of Georgia working at the National Museum of Manuscripts as part of her Peace Corps journey. And in 2010, she was a teacher with the Semester at Sea program, in which college students traveled the world on a cruise ship while taking classes. About 570 students participated in the four-month program that visited nine countries, and Tobie taught classes each day.

Katrina and beyond

Africa, though a challenge, was nothing compared to what Tobie saw in the U.S. in 2005 as a Red Cross responder during Hurricane Katrina.

“In some ways it was extremely difficult and harrowing, even traumatic,” she said. “Not just for me, but for all. The number of people coming in, the crowd, was gigantic.

“People needed medical care, food. Volunteers were sheltered together dormitory style with bunk beds. And the need was so great.”

Tobie and a group of Red Cross volunteers helped Katrina evacuees at shelters in St. Charles and Alexandria.

It was an already incredibly difficult situation made even tougher by Hurricane Rita, which followed closely on the heels of Katrina. Evacuees had to be moved from one shelter to another to escape that storm.

“There was a mile long of traffic. We took up the whole highway,” Tobie said of the transition.

With toilets backing up, and no electricity or running water, it was a tragic situation, Tobie said. She remembers one shelter at a community fairground.

“It was very hot in September in Louisiana,” she said. “Some buses were



ABOVE: Tobie Weist has made many lasting friendships with fellow volunteers through her years of volunteerism. **BELOW:** Tobie helped evacuees in Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. (Courtesy photos)



loaded to bring homeless people to another town but dropped them at the fairgrounds with no notice.

“We had one person who needed care for a colostomy bag, one had just received a last dose of chemotherapy the prior day. Some were complaining of heart problems, so we called in emergency medical.

“I slept in the same area as them, but on the floor. I woke up to a huge amount of crying. One man who had reported heart problems the day before had died and was sheltered with his two little children. We had called (EMTs) in to help (the day before), and they dismissed him. But he was not OK. Many of those we took in were not OK.

“The Red Cross did as good as they could. The organization I saw was as good as it could be, well organized. But it is taxing on you.”

Tobie and the other volunteers carried forth, serving at two or three other shelters in Louisiana before their three-week assignment ended and they returned home.

Wild lands, wildfires

Back home in Western Montana,

wildfires continued calling Tobie into service.

Whether it was Missoula, Hamilton, Seeley Lake or elsewhere, Tobie volunteered at shelters when needed.

“Montanans don’t like shelters, but when they have to go, they do,” she said. “And they are happy to have a roof over their heads.”

In recordings and manuscripts at UM’s Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, Tobie talks about teaching overseas in South Korea, Botswana, Nigeria and Tanzania and of her extensive work on the Northern Cheyenne reservation and how it influenced her anthropology career.

Tobie now enjoys spending time with her two sons, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

And although she no longer volunteers in Red Cross shelters, she encourages others to lend their time and talent to the organization.

“I think there is a lot of gratification working toward a clear, lineated cause where the danger is clear,” she said. “The Red Cross spends a lot of effort on training its volunteers for shelter work. It is very easy to be a volunteer.”

— *Story by Amy Joyner, writing team volunteer*