

RED ALERTS!



Keeping our valued Red Cross volunteers engaged and informed



ON THE HORIZON

■ **CPR/first aid training classes:**
Bozeman — Feb. 4, blended class, partially online, 6:30 p.m.

Hamilton — Feb. 22, full classroom training, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Hamilton — Feb. 29, full classroom training, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Contact Shellie Creveling at 406-468-8875 or shellie.creveling2@redcross.org.

■ **Training Institute**, March 27-30, Holiday Inn, West Yellowstone. Check back for sign-up information.

■ **Consider supporting Red Cross** as you file your taxes. Line 39 of the Idaho individual income tax form provides an easy way to support our work. These tax-deductible donations stay in Idaho and help provide services.



MILESTONES

ROBERT FRISBY, 15 years

JAMES THORNTON, 10 years

LANDIS MEEKS, 10 years

RICHARD NIESLANIK, 5 years



Recently Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces Program Manager Sara Cease delivered comfort kits to Scott Brooke, the Volunteers of America Northern Rockies Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program program manager, and David Crenshaw, service coordinator for Supportive Services for Veteran Families. Veterans will receive these hygiene items.

Bringing comfort to homeless vets

Red Cross delivers hygiene items to groups who provide support to those who served

Along an interstate exit in Helena, Scott Brooke saw two men holding signs reading “homeless veteran.” He pulled over to visit with them.

One had served in Vietnam, and the other during the Reagan years of the Cold War.

Scott explained to the men where they could find a shower and a hot meal on their trek to Missoula. And, thanks to the American Red Cross and Red Cross donors, partners and volunteers, Scott also had comfort kits to offer the veterans.

“I told them, ‘This is to help you get along,’” he said. “They were appreciative.”

The comfort kits, which also go to families after an emergency such as a house fire or natural disaster, contain personal hygiene items such as toothpaste and a toothbrush, soap, shampoo and shaving gel. They may be the first small step back to recovery for someone who has lost everything, or they may be a comfort for a homeless veteran.

“I think these supplies are great. They’re basic needs, essentials,” Scott said. “It’s an expense they have but can’t meet. This is a kit that’s a needed thing to get back on track and develop good habits.”

Scott works with homeless veterans as part

SEE COMFORT, PAGE 2

Volunteer answers call for rare blood

When American Red Cross blood donor Alice Klundt donates blood, her contribution becomes a part of the American Rare Donor Program, which helps to supply hard-to-find blood products across the United States, and in some rare cases, to other countries across the world.

Alice’s blood type is O positive, but that’s just part of her blood’s story.

Red blood cells carry markers on their surface called antigens. These antigens are what determine a donor’s blood type. This is the A, B and O types with which we are all familiar. However, what you might not know is there are at least 600



Red Cross blood donor and volunteer Alice Klundt of Great Falls.

other blood group antigens.

Alice is registered in the American Rare Donor Program because of the

unusual combination of the most common red blood cell antigens not present on her red blood cells. Her full blood type, called her RBC phenotype, is shared by only 0.42% of the world’s population — less than one half of one percent.

When a patient receives a blood transfusion, they can develop RBC antibodies to antigens missing on their red blood cells but are on the transfused blood. This happens when the patient’s immune system recognizes the donor blood as foreign. People who receive multiple

SEE RARE, PAGE 2

When is territory realignment?

We have been hearing questions about when the Red Cross of Idaho and Montana will make the move to the Pacific Division.

Nationally, Red Cross is in the process of transitioning from two Biomedical Services divisions and seven Humanitarian Services divisions to six new One Red Cross divisions. In transitioning from seven to six divisions, no single division has simply gone away. All divisions, as we know them today, will experience change in our new structure, some more than others.

In April, the Idaho and Montana Region will move from the North Cen-



tral Division to the Pacific Division, which includes Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska and Pacific Islands Regions. The Idaho and Montana Region will also include the Oregon counties of Malheur, Union, Wallowa and Baker. The Washington counties of Garfield and Asotin will move back to

the Washington Region.

In short, we will continue to be the Idaho and Montana Region but will now move to the Pacific Division.

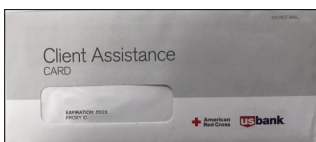
We are confident these changes will further unite us as one organization and put us in a position to better serve communities.

If you have more questions about territory realignment or other Red Cross topics you are curious about or questions you would like addressed in this section, please click [here](#). All submissions through this link are anonymous. Or you can send an email to matthew.ochsner@redcross.org.

Help track client assistance cards

It's crucial for Red Cross to keep an accurate record of all client assistance cards (CACs) and mission cards issued to volunteers and staff in the field. We are introducing a new tool to streamline this process.

In February, all Disaster Cycle Services volunteers will receive an email inviting them to verify their current inventory of CACs and mission cards. This email will be called the Quarterly



Cardholder Verification and will come from Regional Disaster Officer Ted Koenig.

It will include a link to a brief online form asking you to record your name

and the current count of cards in your possession.

If you are a Disaster Action Team volunteer or supervisor who does not carry CACs, please still complete the form indicating you do not hold cards. All volunteers in possession of CACs and/or mission cards must complete the form, regardless of position.

Thank you and please keep an eye out for an email.

Comfort: Building partnerships

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of Volunteers of America, and he keeps several comfort kits in his car so if he sees a veteran on the side of the road, he has something to hand to them.

"I've been doing this for a decade, and I don't give out cash," he said. "At least I had something to help with."

Scott also shared boxes of comfort kits with the homeless vets health care program at Fort Harrison in Helena, local posts of the VFW and the Ameri-

can Legion, God's Love Shelter, and Helena's Got Your 6, a new charity supporting veterans.

Comfort kits built by AT&T employees in Boise during a Red Cross community day are being used across the region for homeless veterans, said Anthony Trimarco, regional Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces director.

As well as distributing kits to community partners, Red Cross volunteers give the kits to homeless veterans who come to the VA for stand-down events.

"It's a good way for us to stay in touch with our homeless veteran population," Anthony said. "They see we provide something tangible."

A Boise VFW post that distributes packages to homeless veterans at Christmas partnered with the Red Cross to distribute comfort kits, too.

"This builds an enduring partnership, helps folks having a hard time at the holidays, and serves the community," Anthony said.

— By volunteer Kristen Inbody

Rare: Diverse donor pool important

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

transfusions are at a higher risk of developing these antibodies. Pregnancy also can increase the risk of developing antibodies to red cell antigens as the mother's immune system reacts to the baby's blood during gestation.

With some rare blood types, there may be few if any people in the area with the same rare blood type. In these situations, the American Rare Donor Program, and occasionally the international blood donor community, team up to find these exceedingly rare blood types. A child was recently determined to have only eight donor matches in the entire world.

Closer to home, one anemic woman in central Montana has been receiving multiple red blood cell transfusions every few weeks. The continued exposure to donor blood has caused her to develop five antibodies to common red cell antigens. These antibodies have reduced her potential donor pool to about 1 percent of the country.

Race can play a factor in blood typing, so maintaining a diverse donor pool is vital. The prevalence of some of these rare RBC antigens are associated with specific ethnicities. A hospital patient who needs a blood subtype RzRz, for

example, relies mainly on Native American and Alaska Native donors.

The Duffy null blood type is found almost exclusively in the African-American community of donors.

The more people who donate red cells, the better chance of finding those with rare red blood cell phenotypes.

Piecing together the detailed blood profile is like working a "big puzzle," said Wendy Palmer, Immunohematology Reference Laboratory supervisor with the American Red Cross laboratory in Great Falls. "It really is amazing to see it all come together."

The science is constantly progressing, and the American Red Cross is adapting to the latest research. Technology has made a huge difference for people with rare blood types. Computerized registries keep track of which rare units are available across the country, or which donors need to be called in to provide their rare red blood cells.

If the patient's red blood cells aren't perfectly matched to these donors, or compatible with these donors, the body rejects the donor red cells or the white blood cells can attack the donor blood. The recipient's organs start working overtime and might even fail. The patient's body may go into crisis immediately or soon after the transfusion.

People with rare blood can donate a stockpile for themselves if they are expecting surgery or a situation where a blood transfusion might be needed, such as giving birth. That's what one area mother did.

About 99.9 percent of people have Lan positive red blood cells, but this woman's red blood cells are Lan negative. Following her physician's advice, she prepared for her delivery by donating a pint of her own blood to be frozen and saved in case she should need a transfusion during delivery. The Red Cross also encouraged her family to be tested to identify any compatible donors. This would allow them to help each other in a crisis requiring a rapid donation.

The Red Cross sends out letters to donors like Alice when they are determined to have a rare blood type, asking them to join the American Rare Donor Program Registry.

Alice, a Red Cross volunteer who lives in Great Falls, didn't hesitate to say yes.

Her last blood donation went to help save a life in North Carolina.

"Any time you can help someone, that's a good thing," she said. "Every pint helps."

— By volunteer Kristen Inbody