

# RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



## ON THE HORIZON

- Oct. 9-15, [Fire Prevention Week](#)
- Oct. 10, [World Mental Health Day](#)
- Oct. 10, [Indigenous Peoples' Day](#)
- Oct. 16, [World Food Day](#)
- Oct. 31, Halloween



# 20

Disaster responses in September. Clients helped: 96



## MILESTONES

### October

- DANNY RAINE, 45 years
- ERIN BRAY, 25 years
- JO SCOTT, 10 years
- CATHERINE ANDERSON, 5 years
- CHRIS BATT, 5 years
- SANDRA BLACKMER, 5 years
- WILLIAM BUCK, 5 years
- SEINA CANALES, 5 years
- SARAH DeFOREST, 5 years
- BRIAN DUFFY, 5 years
- JUSTIN HACKING, 5 years
- MARGARET HOPSON, 5 years
- DIANE JACKSON, 5 years
- HOWARD JOHNSON, 5 years
- RHIANNON KNOX, 5 years
- KEITH KUKULKA, 5 years
- ALAN MILLER, 5 years
- CONNIE MILLER, 5 years
- BARBARA MINER, 5 years
- DeANN STOOLMAN, 5 years
- RICK STOOLMAN, 5 years
- AMANDA THIEL, 5 years
- KATHERINE YARRISH, 5 years

### INFORMATION

We will host virtual information sessions to discuss the need for trained disaster volunteers in large responses like Hurricane Ian and share information about local volunteer needs. Sessions will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 4, at 1 and 5:30 p.m. Click here to RSVP <https://rdcrs.org/3rkW3Jt>.

# Her answer: Yes



Vicky Johns wears many volunteer hats for Red Cross, several simultaneously. She is quick to respond when needed, and she says she loves it. "It keeps me busy and out of trouble."

# Volunteer has fingers in multiple pies of assistance

It's been a whirlwind few weeks for Idaho Red Cross volunteer Vicky Johns. Over Labor Day weekend, Vicky, who lives in Meridian, had just finished donating blood and was at the store picking up a few things when she got a call from Regional Disaster Officer Scott O'Connell.

An overnight fire at a Ketchum condominium building had destroyed 26 homes, and Scott was looking for someone who could jump in the vehicle with him and meet with the families who had lost everything. So just two hours after she had finished up in the donor's chair, Vicky pivoted into her disaster responder role and was in the passenger's seat for the 150-mile trek to Ketchum alongside Scott and volunteer Jack Smith.

The team talked with families, began case-work, handed out comfort kits and checked in with community partners before rolling back into Boise at midnight.

Vicky's reliability as a volunteer makes her a go-to person when immediate help is needed. Yet Vicky's take on the quick trip was how well others responded to the situation.

### BECOME A VOLUNTEER

The American Red Cross offers volunteer opportunities for almost any interest and skill set. Training is provided and the payoff is priceless.

Learn more by emailing [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org) or visiting [redcross.org/volunteer](https://redcross.org/volunteer).



"The city up there was wonderful," Vicky said. "Even today when I follow up with the clients, they're getting a lot of community support. They really took care of them."

A few days later Vicky shifted gears again, beginning a virtual two-week disaster deployment with the Northern California wildfires, assisting in staff services. In this role, she checks in volunteers as they arrive on the scene

SEE YES, PAGE 3

# Montana flood destroys hard work



Ed and Lucy Nilson

Just two months after Ed and Lucy Nilson had finished renovating the basement in their Red Lodge home, their work was wiped out in only a few hours.

On June 13-14, heavy rainfall followed by significant mountain snowmelt swelled rivers and creeks, including Rock Creek which runs just a block from the Nilsons' home.

"There was so much water coming down," Ed said. "It was a perfect storm."

The Nilsons watched as water levels continued to rise, and at about 1:30 in the morning on June 13, they got a knock on their door from local law enforcement telling them they needed to evacuate. They headed to a nearby community church,

SEE FLOOD, PAGE 3



Nicole Sirak Irwin, Red Cross of Idaho, Montana and East Oregon CEO, presented at a special event recently in Boise, focused on the crisis in Ukraine. She was joined by Idaho Sen. Jim Risch; former CIA analyst Jeff Carr; George Lynch, a Red Cross specialist in International Humanitarian Law; and Red Cross board member Roy Eiguren.

# Ukrainian plight focus of event

In September, the Red Cross took part in a special event in downtown Boise focusing on the situation in Ukraine, the U.S. response and the humanitarian and legal implications of the crisis.

Idaho Sen. Jim Risch provided the keynote address, highlighting his recent visit to Ukraine and his perspective on

his conversation with President Zelensky. A panel discussion followed, featuring Risch; former CIA analyst Jeff Carr; and George Lynch, the American Red Cross lead lecturer on International Humanitarian Law.

Red Cross of Idaho, Montana and East Oregon CEO Nicole Sirak Irwin also highlighted the international work

of the Red Cross.

Roy Eiguren, president of the Eiguren Public Policy Firm and an Idaho Red Cross board member, was the moderator. Tina Polishchuk also talked about the work of the Idaho Alliance for Ukrainian Refugees and Immigrants.

About 70 people attended.

# Medical pros needed as volunteers

Find out which volunteers were honored for service over the past year, and take a look at the Position of the Month to see if you can recommend someone who might be interested. Also, Ketchup with Friends is at a new time. Read on.

## POSITION OF THE MONTH.

Every day, the Red Cross sees the heartbreak of people coping with more intense storms, heavier rainfall, higher temperatures, stronger hurricanes and more devastating wildfires. It's critical to have a trained and ready volunteer workforce to make sure we can provide relief at a moment's notice.

Title: Disaster Health Services Volunteer.

Locations: Virtual.

Time commitment: Two to four shifts per month, for a total of 10 to 20 hours per month on-call.

Job description: This position is great for medical professionals who want to use their skills to give back. During times of disaster, these volunteers provide disaster-related health care including assistance with replacement of medication and consumable medical supplies, health assessments and referrals for spiritual care and mental health counseling.

Free online training provided and counts toward nursing continuing education units.

## IN THE KNOW



RED CROSS NEWS & HAPPENINGS

Questions? Contact [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org) for more information.

**KETCHUP WITH FRIENDS.** We want to remind you all of the new time for Ketchup with Friends, from 7-7:30 in the evening. This is our social time for volunteers to swap stories and experiences, and get to know each other. Please join fellow volunteers at our virtual social time, Tuesday, Oct. 11, from 7 -7:30 p.m.

Those who attend are eligible to win a door prize. Click [here](#) to join the meeting.

If you join and don't have access, please send Nate Gilbert an email at [Nathan.Gilbert@RedCross.org](mailto:Nathan.Gilbert@RedCross.org), and we will see what we can do to help get you connected.

We hope you can join us this month. See you all there!



**VOLUNTEER WINNERS.** Congratulations to the eight winners of this year's volunteer hours drawings. All volunteers who logged at least 20 hours were entered into a drawing to win a great Red Cross prize of their choosing. Those who logged at least 100 hours were also entered in a second drawing.

This year's winners in the 20 hours or more group were:

**Traci Bruha** — Communications/public affairs and disaster services, Baker, Mont., 22 hours

**Paul Hicks** — Disaster services, Helena, Mont., 527 hours

**Anita Byrne** — Blood donor ambassador, Missoula, Mont., 75 hours

**Susan Baughn** — Development/fundraising, Boise, Idaho, 81 hours

This year's winners in the 100-hours drawing:

**Pamela Hochstein** — Blood Services transportation specialist, Meridian, Idaho, 107 hours

**Megan McGuire** — Disaster services, Vale, Ore., 378 hours

**Angela Wartel** — Disaster services, and Service to the Armed Forces, Lewiston, Idaho, 130 hours

**Mike Darr** — Blood Services transportation specialist, disaster services and Service to the Armed Forces, 258 hours

Congrats again . And please remember to keep logging your hours.

# Time to report the status of client assistance, mission cards

The quarterly inventory of Client Assistance and Mission Cards is under way. The reporting window is open **October 1 - 28.**

**Reporting cards in hand as early as possible in the reporting window is the best practice.**

By now you should have received an



with the link to the **easy online form** (<https://forms.office.com/r/nhCqgBhGfd>) and helpful FAQs. If you

have problems reporting, contact [angela.james2@redcross.org](mailto:angela.james2@redcross.org). To successfully report, you will need the following information on the envelopes containing cards: batch number, envelope number, and last 4 of proxy number. Thank you for making this process smooth and successful for our region.

# Energetic staffer earns promotion

A familiar face in our Red Cross region, Gini Kay, has become our Preparedness and Partnerships manager.

This new position will help develop key partnerships that will help make the communities we serve more resilient and ready in case of emergencies.

Gini, who lives in Missoula, has been a member of our region's Volunteer Services team for the past four years

and has a passion for preparedness.

She holds a master's in public health and fell in love with preparedness while researching how smoke molecules affect breathing during wildfire season.

She has a vision for how we can support our volunteer leaders and help build a sustainable approach to preparedness.

Congrats, Gini!



## Flood:

# Water just poured in

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hopeful that their home would be spared, but after a bridge washed out, the Rock Creek floodwaters changed course.

"We ended up with about five feet of water in the basement that of course took everything," he said. "We had three trailer loads of drywall and carpet and a vanity and just stuff."

Their backyard and detached garage also flooded, and the water was just one step away from spilling into the main floor of their home as well. The Nilsons evacuated for the next 10 days, staying at a friend's house until power and water were restored.

As the Nilsons and their neighbors worked to regroup and recover, several organizations, including the Red Cross and Salvation Army, were there to lend a hand. They attended an event at the Red Lodge Civic Center where non-profits and churches were available to talk about the help they could provide. Red Cross gave the Nilsons financial aid they could use to help meet their most immediate needs and also provided them with a cleanup kit with items like a bucket, shovel and gloves they could use as they began the difficult process of cleaning their home.

"We appreciated everyone showing that care and compassion," he said.

During its months-long response, the Red Cross and its partners served more than 4,900 meals and snacks to those impacted by flooding across the state, distributed 800 emergency kits, offered 460 people mental health support and spiritual care and delivered more than \$60,000 in financial assistance.

Several months after the Nilsons



Torrential flooding earlier this summer forced the Nilsons to evacuate their home. Red Cross volunteers were there to help.

### BECOME A RED CROSS DISASTER RESPONDER



Red Cross volunteers helped more than 550 Montanans last year following disasters. Besides meeting families' immediate needs like food, clothing and shelter, Red Cross responders also connect clients with disaster mental health support and help replace items like eye glasses and prescriptions.

To learn more about becoming a Red Cross Disaster Action Team volunteer, visit [redcross.org/volunteer](http://redcross.org/volunteer) or email [IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org](mailto:IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org).

evacuated their home in the early morning hours, they have made significant progress in re-renovating their basement. They have replaced their furnace and hot water heater and have begun to put up new drywall, but work like replacing the downstairs wiring is still ongoing.

"We're getting there," he said. "We're coming along."

There's still much work to do throughout the Red Lodge community as well. The home across the street had to be torn down after floodwaters pushed their neighbor's detached garage off its foundation and into their house, causing severe structural dam-

age. Repairs also continue on key infrastructure like bridges and roads.

"It's going to take a while to get back to where we were," he said.

But despite everything they've been through and the challenges that still lie ahead, Ed said he's thankful for the organizations and volunteers who delivered comfort and kindness when they needed it most.

"In these polarized times in our country it's just wonderful to see how people came together," he said. "People who just showed up to help us like the Red Cross. We will be forever grateful."

— Matt Ochsner  
Regional Communications Director

# Yes: It's great to have the time to give

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and makes sure they have a place to sleep, connects them with a supervisor and then helps out-process them as they leave their assignment.

"It's just making sure they're actively engaged and not forgotten somewhere," she said.

She's also simultaneously helping those closer to home who have been impacted by disaster.

Vicky is overseeing a three-person team in Montana helping families whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged during June's flooding apply for financial assistance beyond what they received earlier this summer.

Donating blood, meeting with families after the Ketchum condo fire, deploying virtually to assist with the California wildfires and leading recovery work in Montana -- Vicky has worn countless Red Cross hats in September and touched many lives.

"I love it," she said. "It keeps me busy and out of trouble."

In December, Vicky will celebrate her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Red Cross -- an organization she connected with through happenstance while living in California. Retired from her career with the Air National Guard, Vicky was volunteering with a youth program and attending a service fair in San Luis Obispo when she noticed the booth

directly across from theirs. It was the Red Cross.

"I was talking to them about what they do, and I was like 'Hey, I would love to do that,'" she said. "I signed up that night."

Almost a decade and countless contributions later, she's glad she did.

"Time is just something I have that people need, and I want to give it, just like blood," she said.

"Every day you kind of feel good at night when you go to bed that you can say you made someone's life a little bit better."

— Matt Ochsner  
Regional Communications Director