

RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



ON THE HORIZON

■ **January, National Blood Donor month.** Make an appointment to donate at RedCrossBlood.org

■ **Jan. 11, Idaho-Montana-East Oregon virtual volunteer recognition event,** 7-8 p.m. See page 2 for more information.

■ **Jan. 17, Martin Luther King Jr. Day.** See page 3 for more information.

■ **February, Black History Month and Cancer Prevention Month**



28

Disaster responses in December. **Clients helped:** 133



MILESTONES

January

JULIE BROADHEAD, 15 years

BILL SCHREIBER, 15 years

BEVERLEY

McDOUGAL, 10 years

PAUL AYERS, 5 years

ROBIN CORY, 5 years

RYKER EDWARDS, 5 years

SCOTT FAIRFIELD, 5 years

CHRISTINE

STINSON, 5 years

SUSAN TONARELLI, 5 years

Donor gratitude pours from mom



Ellis Kusch, right, with his mom Jennifer and his siblings Afton and Kennedy. When he was just 3, Ellis was diagnosed with a rare gastrointestinal disease. Now 14, Ellis is doing much better. “He’s funny and a really, really happy kid,” his mom said.

Boy took tough path to health

More than a decade after he was diagnosed with a rare gastrointestinal disease, 14-year-old Ellis Kusch is back to just being a regular curious kid again.

“I’m really into engineering ... gears and stuff like that,” Ellis said from his home in Idaho Falls. “I like working with my hands and building LEGOs and doing stuff in woodshop.”

And like many boys his age, Ellis enjoys video games and playing baseball.

“He’s just a friendly little guy,” his mother Jennifer said. “He’s funny and a really, really happy kid.”

But it hasn’t been an easy path for Ellis, whose childhood has included a whirlwind of surgeries, colostomy bags, Christmas Eve visits to the emergency room, the removal of his colon and an urgent Life Flight trip to Primary Children’s Hospital in Salt Lake City.

Shortly after his third birthday, Ellis was diagnosed with Hirschsprung’s, a condition that affects the intestines. Surgery after surgery would follow, and after one particularly complicated procedure, he began hemorrhaging and urgently needed blood – blood made available thanks to the generosity of blood donors.

“I watched my pale baby boy recover the color in his cheeks as he received multiple bags of blood,” Jennifer said. “I remember sitting at his hospital bed, holding his hand, looking up at the bags pushing life back into his veins and wishing I could thank the person who had donated blood to save my son’s life.”

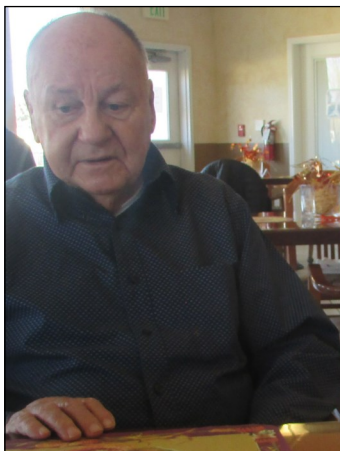
That day Jennifer made a promise to herself. “I vowed that I would donate blood every single chance that comes my way,” she said.



Ellis Kusch

SEE TOUGH, PAGE 3

Red Cross at his side all his life



John Burns, 85, and his son, **Timothy,** lost their New Plymouth, Idaho, area home in September to fire. John was stunned how quickly Red Cross was on the scene to help.

During his days in the Marine Corps and as a blood donor, John Burns was no stranger to the Red Cross and the work they do. But even he was surprised by how quickly they responded to his home fire near New Plymouth in Payette County, Idaho, in September.

“I was stunned. They were still trying to put the fire out and (Red Cross volunteers) were there already,” the 85-year-old said. “I don’t even know how they knew.”

That night, John was in his bedroom when he heard his son Timothy, 33, scream from the living room. Timothy had flipped on a light switch in their trailer when flames immediately began racing up the wall. John emerged to see Timothy trying to extinguish the fire with a garden hose but with little luck. Soon the

police and the fire department arrived and helped them both get out.

“It went up in 10 minutes,” John said.

Red Cross responders gave the pair financial assistance they could use for immediate needs like food, clothing and shelter. The Burnout Fund also provided support.

“That helped immediately because Timmy’s wallet had burned up ... everything had burned up,” John said. “I’m very grateful for those organizations.”

Timothy had lived in the trailer since he was 4 so its sudden loss was an incredible shock. The outpouring of support helped soften the blow.

“It was really a big blessing at a

SEE AT HIS SIDE, PAGE 2

Blood collection ops enhanced

We have exciting news to share around some expansions and renovations to our blood collection operations and facilities in Montana and Idaho.

Meridian, Idaho

Plans are underway to add a blood and platelet collection center in Meridian. This center will increase our capacity to collect platelets, the clotting portion of the blood so vital to cancer patients.

This new donor center is in addition to our current blood collection efforts and will not replace any fixed sites in the region.

We are excited to have two blood collection sites in the Boise/Treasure Valley area.

We are early in the process, and over the coming months will work with the community to identify potential sites.

Twin Falls, Idaho

In November, our team began a search for a mobile staging location in Twin Falls. By adding a staging site in southern Idaho, it will improve our overall efficiency and decrease transportation costs and other expenses as we collect lifesaving blood at drives throughout the area.

Great Falls, Montana

A widescale renovation project is currently underway at our Great Falls facility, 1300 28th St. S.

We will be adding a mobile staging area to the building's first floor, making it much easier and more efficient for our teams to load and unload supplies as they head out the door and return from mobile blood drives and disaster responses.

Also, we are in the process of up-

grading and modernizing the third floor, which houses our blood testing and processing lab, our blood donation area and office and meeting space.

Bozeman, Montana

We are exiting the lease at our current donor center in Bozeman, 300 N. Willson Ave., Suite 103A, and have secured a lease for a temporary site adjacent to the current center, also at 300 N. Willson Ave., Suite 2003. We expect to move into the temporary site in late January.

Construction will begin soon at what will become our new permanent home in Bozeman at 221 E. Oak St.

We are excited about these projects and how they will improve our collection, testing and distribution of lifesaving blood products. Watch for more updates in the months to come.

Remote work lures volunteers

Red Cross is busy recruiting for a handful of crucial volunteer jobs. Also, the recognition extravaganza is just around the (virtual) corner, and you will want to RSVP and test your system so you can attend. Read on.

POSITION HIGHLIGHTS. The Red Cross could not deliver our mission without our amazing volunteers! In the Volunteer Services department, we share opportunities to bring in new volunteers, support current volunteers in their roles and provide human resource activities for the region.

For all three positions below, the location is from the comfort of your own home.

Recruitment Volunteer. We are the warm welcome as new individuals start their volunteer journey! We share open opportunities with the public, and help people find the perfect opportunity for their interests and schedule.

Time commitment. This position is flexible and can accommodate most schedules with a minimum of two hours a month commitment.

Engagement Team Member. Supports Volunteer Services department with monitoring the engagement and satisfaction of volunteers serving in the region. Projects include calling volunteers to thank them for their service, running monthly reports and assisting the Recognition Lead with recognition and awards tasks.

IN THE KNOW



RED CROSS NEWS & HAPPENINGS

Time commitment. Approximately 2 hours a week.

Volunteer Partner for Regional Volunteer Services Officer. Volunteer works closely with leadership staff to represent the region on national meetings and report back details. This computer savvy volunteer will use our Volunteer Connection website to run reports the first week of the month/quarter. In-person tasks include printing or organizing items to be shipped to volunteers across the region.

Time commitment: As needed, approximately 4-6 hours a month.

If interested, contact Gini at IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or by phone/text at (406) 493-8778.

Volunteer Recognition Event



VOLUNTEER THANKS. Volunteers across the region, as well as their family and friends, are invited to join the special volunteer recognition event virtually from 7 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 11.

RSVPs are requested to help determine the volume of attendees. Please use the RSVP form in Volunteer Con-

nection. We would love all of you to join us. Follow this link to join: [CLICK HERE](#)

We will have two practice/IT help sessions so people can make sure they will be able to connect the evening of the event.

The two practices will occur on Tuesday, Jan. 4, and then again on Monday, Jan. 10. To join the practice sessions so you can learn the "how to's" for the event or if you need any additional help with joining, follow these links.

Tuesday, Jan. 4
[CLICK HERE](#)

Monday, Jan. 10
[CLICK HERE](#)

KETCHUP WITH FRIENDS 2.0. These social sessions with volunteers have provided many lighthearted moments throughout 2021. Beginning in February, this feature will return. Please consider joining us for upcoming sessions. Meetings are held the second Tuesday each month, from 7:30-8 p.m., and you can sign up to win a door prize.



We would love to have additional event team members to help us plan more fun events like this one.

If you are interested, please contact Nate Gilbert at Nathan.Gilbert@redcross.org.

All his life: They were there for me

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

time of chaos to know your community was there for you and is ready to help," Timothy said.

Friends from their church gave John a safe place to stay for a few weeks, while Timothy stayed with family.

Eventually another church member helped find John a permanent home, an assisted-living facility in Emmett.

"It's a beautiful place," John said. "I'm doing fabulous."

He said at various points in his life, Red Cross has been there, and he's grateful for them now more than ever.

"They were there for me in the service, they were there for me here, they have been there at the blood bank, so they've been a thread through my life."

SUPPORT DISASTER RESPONSE

Red Cross volunteers helped more than 770 people in Idaho last year following a disaster, the vast majority of them home fires. Besides helping with families' most 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 how you can support this important work with a financial gift visit redcross.org/Idaho.

More than 90 percent of the Red Cross workforce are volunteers. Red Cross offers volunteer opportunities for almost any interest and skillset.

Learn more by emailing IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or calling 406-493-8778.



Red Cross volunteers Augustus Seeley and Rachael Gray Hawk welcome clients to the Multi-Agency Resource Center at Montana ExpoPark in Great Falls following the Gibson Flats and West Wind grassfires.

Responders leap in to help

Red Cross responders delivered comfort and care after a pair of wind-driven grassfires burned homes in two Montana communities in early December. The Gibson Flats fire destroyed 11 homes southeast of Great Falls while the West Wind fire forced the evacuation of the entire town of Denton and destroyed at least 13 homes.

Businesses, bridges, grain elevators and several other structures also burned in the Fergus County community.

Red Cross teams opened evacuation centers at Great Falls Central Catholic High School and the Lewistown Civic Center and helped meet families' most immediate needs including mental health support.

In coordination with the Cascade County Community Organizations Active in Disaster, Red Cross also opened a Multi-Agency Resource Center in Great Falls to make it easier for families to access resources.

Long-term recovery assistance is currently underway as the Red Cross continues to help these families.

Tough: Donating blood is 'cool'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Even before Ellis' struggles, blood donation was part of Jennifer's life. Her dad is a regular donor, and she had given a couple of times herself. But that day changed everything.

"I remember thinking quite literally that my son was almost going to die and feeling completely helpless," she said. "Shortly after the transfusion he wanted to get up and walk, and he was alert and talking. It was the difference between watching my son and feeling totally helpless and having hope."

As Ellis worked his way through the treatment and learned to live with Hirschprung's, Jennifer continued to roll up her sleeve and donate. Then one day in 2017, Jennifer, who works in human resources at Melaleuca, got an opportunity to make an even greater impact.

"My boss tapped me on the shoulder and said 'Hey, the Red Cross wants to do an onsite blood drive and we need somebody from HR to head it up. Will you do it?' And I said, 'Oh my gosh, I have passion behind this. Yes!'"

Jennifer has been helping organize drives at Melaleuca ever since. The wellness company hosts an annual drive in Idaho Falls that Jennifer helps organize and another drive each year at their



Ellis as an ill toddler.

call center in Rexburg. The Idaho Falls drive averages 52 units, enough blood to help save up to 156 lives.

Jennifer and Ellis are also inspiring others by sharing their story. Jennifer's dad is a member of the Utah Red Cross board of directors, and in July, she traveled to Ogden to speak to that group. She also has a podcast that focuses on service and helping others, and Ellis has told his story through StoryCorps and during a radiothon hosted by Primary Children's Hospital.

And while he continues to face daily challenges other kids his age never have

PLEASE GIVE

Schedule an appointment to donate lifesaving blood today. Visit RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED-CROSS

OR VOLUNTEER

Even if you're not eligible to donate blood you can still help keep hospital shelves stocked. Please consider volunteering as a blood donor ambassador. These volunteers welcome donors to Red Cross drives, help schedule their next appointment and make sure they have a good experience. To learn more, email IDMT.Recruiting@redcross.org or call or text (406) 493-8778.

to worry about, things are getting easier. What was once a monthly trip to Salt Lake for check-ups and treatment have been scaled back to annual visits. One day when he's older, Ellis plans to donate blood himself and give the same gift of life that someone gave him.

"Donating blood is a really cool thing that helps a lot of people," he said. "I would tell them thank you."

Honor MLK with day of volunteerism

This January, the Red Cross of Idaho, Montana and East Oregon launches the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service across our region. During the week of Jan. 17, we encourage everyone to take part in a volunteer activity or event that fits their interests and passions.

● **BE RED CROSS READY:** Everyone knows the Red Cross helps people during emergencies. But you may not know that it's also part of our mission to help you help yourself! Ensure you are safe should disaster strike by tuning in at 6 p.m. MST on Jan. 17 for a Be Red Cross Ready presentation. Join

on your computer or mobile app. Click [here](#) to join the meeting, or call in (audio only) at +1-901-248-1330, 18200224# (this nine-digit number is your conference ID.)

● **DONATE LIFESAVING BLOOD:** Every two seconds someone needs blood. Find a blood drive near you by visiting RedCrossBlood.org and entering your zip code or calling 800-RED-CROSS.

● **THE MONTANA RED CROSS BOARD** is holding a blood drive on Jan. 19 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the

Missoula donor center, 2401 N. Reserve St. Use sponsor code MTREDCROSS to make an appointment.

● **HELP US TELL OUR STORY:**

Let friends and families know about the work we're doing by following our pages and sharing posts on Facebook.

Visit our Facebook pages found here: Facebook.com/MontanaRedCross and Facebook.com/IdahoRedCross

However you choose to spend Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, we thank you for doing your part to better your community.