

# RED ALERTS!



Keeping our valued Red Cross volunteers engaged and informed



## BLOOD DRIVE FOR JENNY

The Ravalli County Disaster Action Team is organizing a blood drive in honor of longtime volunteer leader Jenny Erickson, who was recently diagnosed with lymphoma.

The drive is Nov. 11 from 1 to 6 p.m. at the LDS Church in Stevensville.

To sign up, call 800-GIVE-LIFE, use the Blood Donor app or visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org). The code word is Jenny.

If you aren't in the area but would like to donate blood in Jenny's honor, contact Wendy McGrew at 406-273-8337. She can provide a card that will let Jenny know of your gift.

## MEET A LEADER



**JACKI KAELIN WILLIAMS,**  
Volunteer Partner, Kamiah

“Being a volunteer partner keeps me better informed as well as feeling like I am contributing.”

**FUN FACT:** “My favorite saying is ‘Mistakes are just apprenticeship to achievements.’ We never stop learning.”



Straight-line winds and tennis ball-size hail did significant damage in Shepherd in August. At least 45 homes were significantly impacted including 15 that were no longer livable.

# ‘Someone was thinking of me’

*Devastated by storm, woman had no idea Red Cross would show up at her door, but she’s extremely grateful they did*

Christina and her daughter were in the process of moving a bed from their shop house in a pole barn to their new mobile home when the storm hit Shepherd, Mont., bringing with it high winds, heavy rain and devastating hail. Before the hail-storm was through, both of her housing options — the shop house and their new trailer — had been destroyed and her family shaken.

“I was in the trailer house with my daughter when it started coming down,” Christina said. “It was unbelievable. All the windows were breaking out at the same time. Golf ball- to tennis ball-size hail was coming through the windows, through the miniblinds and curtains – punching holes in the curtains. I told my daughter to seek shelter in a room that didn’t have windows, and I was trying to push what was left of the curtains back out so it would keep the hail from coming in as heavily. It was pretty unreal.”

The storm collapsed a large portion of the ceiling in the shop house, destroying much of Christina’s personal belongings. Flooding in the mobile home, which she had moved onto the



property just three days earlier, caused severe structural damage and mold growth, making it unlivable. Other outbuildings like her hay shed and her garden shed were also destroyed.

With power out throughout town that night, Christina picked up four neighborhood teens, friends of her daughter’s whose parents were out of town.

“They were in dark houses and were scared to stay by themselves,” she said.

At least she had a generator.

SEE STORM, PAGE 2

# Disaster program specialist takes reins

Erin Helm’s first experiences with the American Red Cross came through the blood transfusions that added five years to her father’s life.

She took Red Cross lifesaving courses, and she’s benefited from Red Cross support programs while serving in the military.

Now Erin is the new Red Cross disaster program specialist for western Montana. She works in Missoula and grew up in Fairview, Mont., and northern Idaho.

Erin also is a lieutenant in the Utah Army National Guard working in military intelli-

gence.

Erin said she learned through her military experience and small-town upbringing that reputation and character matter more than academic degrees and accolades.

Her last job was as an anti-terrorism coordinator, which involved thinking through active-shooter responses, for example. With the Red Cross, she’ll put her skills to use coordinating logistics as the Red Cross responds to fires, floods, storms and



Western Montana Disaster Program Specialist Erin Helm.

SEE HELM, PAGE 2



MILESTONES

- BRENDA FULLER,**  
10 years
- LAUREN DAVIS,**  
5 years
- BRANDON HARNER,**  
5 years
- KELLY KRAUSE,**  
5 years
- JACOB NICHOLS,**  
5 years
- CHERI TATE,**  
5 years

26

Disaster responses in September.

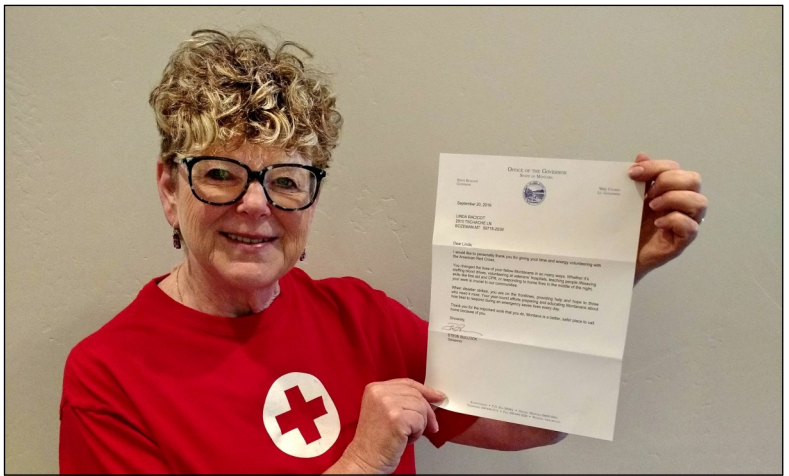
JACKET WINNERS

A few dedicated volunteers are sporting new Red Cross jackets — Betty Robertson, Justin Hacking, Cheryl Minto, Linda Racicot, Beverley McDougal, Dawn Yadlosky, Sherry Israel and Milon McDaniel.

Volunteers who logged 100 hours or deployed in the previous year were entered into the drawings.

Remember to log your hours so you're eligible next year.

Thank you from the governor



Montana Red Cross Community Volunteer Leader Linda Racicot shows off the letter she received from Gov. Steve Bullock thanking her for her service. The governor's office sent out thank-you letters to Red Cross volunteers across Montana.

Montana volunteer recognized

The Volunteer Services team has named Laramie Groats as its volunteer of the quarter. Laramie lives in Missoula and joined the Red Cross in 2017.

She has several Red Cross roles including as a member of the recruitment team, where she manages all external and internal online postings in the region.

"She does an amazing job creating, managing

and renewing these postings," the Volunteer Services team writes. "Because of Laramie's efforts, potential volunteers find out about Red Cross opportunities in their community. Thank you for being such an amazing part of our team!"



Disaster program manager sought

Our very own Chris Volmer has accepted a position with the Idaho Office of Emergency Management. With his departure, the region is seeking a humble, hungry and smart individual to fill the Disaster Program Manager vacancy.

Required competencies include the ability to lead and motivate a geographically dispersed workforce and the ability to engage and sustain partnerships across the full-cycle of prepared-

ness, response and recovery.

Western Idaho is an outdoorsman's paradise, with fishing and hiking in proximity to the vibrant Boise metro area.

If this opportunity interests you, please apply here: americanred-cross.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/American\_Red\_Cross\_Careers/job/Boise-ID/Disaster-Program-Manager\_RC31765.

Storm: Financial assistance, kindness

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Counting her son and daughter, Christina now had two destroyed homes, six people to care for and feed and obvious uncertainty about where to go from here.

Within a day or so help arrived.

"I walked outside because my dogs were barking and I see a Red Cross truck sitting out there, and I'm like 'Why is the Red Cross here? I thought they were only for big disasters overseas somewhere. Are they lost?'"

The Red Cross team provided Christina the financial assistance she needed to cover essentials like food, cleaning supplies, bins to help her salvage and protect what was left of her possessions and propane. They also put her in con-

tact with agriculture resources so she could begin replacing her lost hay.

But perhaps most importantly, they showed Christina someone cared.

"They actually were able to give me a mental break, which was much needed," she said.

"They checked back in with me the next day, the next couple days and even the week after just to see how we were holding up, how we were doing and just the progress that was going on. It was just really nice to know someone was thinking of me."

Mid-move, Christina's stove had been sitting outside when the hail hit and was destroyed. That meant feeding seven people using only a grill. The Red Cross team once again stepped in and helped her purchase a used stove.

"A warm meal was worth a million dollars at that point," she said.

Christina and her family are getting back on their feet. Her daughter's friends have returned home, and she was able to rent a camper trailer where she is living until insurance is straightened out.

"I feel like I'm living in the five-star Bellagio Hotel," she laughed. "I'm just happy to have a solid roof over my head that doesn't leak and there are no giant wolf spiders in there with me."

And she's grateful for the Red Cross truck that arrived at her home.

"She's just an incredible person," Red Cross responder Sherrilyn Hamilton said. "She always had a smile on her face every time we saw her despite what she had gone through. She's an amazing lady."

Helm: Organization helped her family

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

more in western Montana.

"It's an interesting job," she said. "There's so many logistics to handle and personalities to work with. I'm excited to work with all the volunteers doing such good work here and around the world."

Erin hasn't responded to a disaster yet

but looks forward to seeing first-hand the challenges of responding to a disaster and the vital work volunteers do.

Also on her checklist is resuming blood donation. She paused her blood donations while she had two babies recently, but she's getting ready to start giving again.

Erin knows blood donations are a profound gift, saving the lives

every day of trauma victims, cancer patients, tiny babies and people like her father, who had myelofibrosis, an autoimmune disease in which his body attacked his white blood cells.

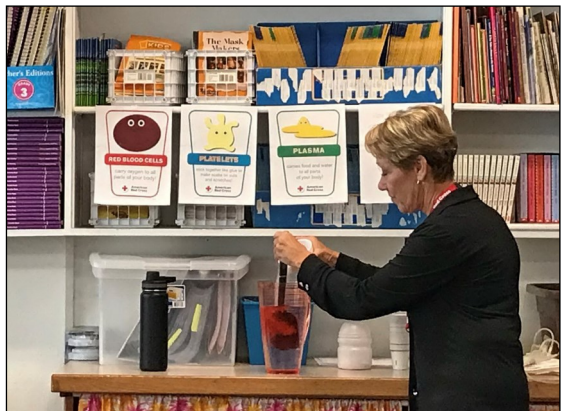
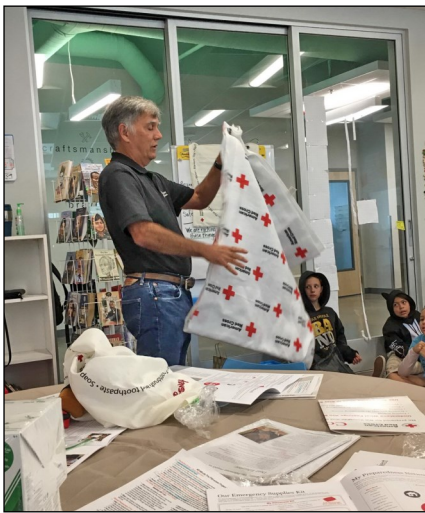
"It changed our lives," she said of blood donations. "He lived five years longer than he would have because of those blood donations and platelets.

— By Kristen Inbody

# *Faces from the field*



Boise volunteer Cora Findley and her husband Jim, pictured below, deployed to Texas in September to provide flooding relief.



LEFT: Volunteer Jim Findley gives a Pillowcase Project presentation at Future Public School in Garden City. ABOVE: Sandy Carlson talks to third-graders at St. Matthew's Catholic School in Kalispell about the importance of blood donation.



ABOVE: Idaho Falls volunteer Layla Johnson provides assistance to those impacted by flooding in Texas. RIGHT: Regional Philanthropy Officer Luis Islas appears on La Perrona radio in Jerome to talk about the importance of working smoke alarms and share the message that Red Cross shelters are open to all.



ABOVE: Madison County firefighter and Idaho Red Cross volunteer Sam Paris installs an alarm. RIGHT: Volunteers Randy Clark, Marty Heisig, Brittney Comon and Don Nesbitt opened and staffed a shelter in Grangeville after an apartment fire displaced 26 people, many of them disabled or elderly.

