

# RED ALERTS!



Keeping our Red Cross volunteer workforce engaged and informed



## ON THE HORIZON

■ **Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 18.**

■ **Idaho Human Rights Day, Jan. 18.**



**23**

**Disaster responses in December. Clients helped: 100**



## SUPPORT HOTLINE

The support hotline offers emotional support during COVID-19. It's staffed by experienced mental health volunteers from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. EST, seven days a week. Call 571-353-1161.



## MILESTONES

**JAMES ARMSTRONG,**  
5 years

**PHIL CARLOS,**  
5 years

**STEVEN CHANDLER,**  
5 years

**GALEN MAGNUSON,**  
5 years

**KIM STOUSE,**  
5 years

**KATHY SWIFT,**  
5 years



John D. Worley looks out at the Yellowstone River in Billings using a wheelchair provided to him by the Montana Red Cross. The BobCat fire outside of Roundup forced the Worleys and several other families from their homes in September. When Red Cross volunteers gave John the wheelchair so he would be able to get outside with his family, tears filled his eyes.

# 'He had tears in his eyes'

*Volunteers provide wheelchair, comfort to family displaced by BobCat wildfire*

**W**hen the Worley family moved from Kentucky to rural Montana, they knew wildfires would be a concern. They just didn't know how real that concern would become.

In early September, the 30,000-acre BobCat fire burning southeast of Roundup forced the Worleys and several of their neighbors from their homes. Rose Worley remembers seeing smoke plumes grow as she stood on her family's land.

"I'm kind of scared of fires anyway, and I knew it was possible (in Montana)," the 58-year-old said. "Our neighbors who live five



miles away lost their home. That was far enough away to not get all panicky, so we just kept watching."

Seeking a change of scenery, multiple gener-

**SEE WILDFIRE, PAGE 2**

# Recovered, volunteer donates plasma

Lee Montgomery doesn't like to be idle. Yet, after 40 years operating his own ceramics manufacturing business with his wife, often working 70 hours a week, retirement sounded good. They moved from California to Idaho to be closer to grandkids, but found they had excess time on their hands and retirement lost its charm. So both found jobs and returned to the work force.

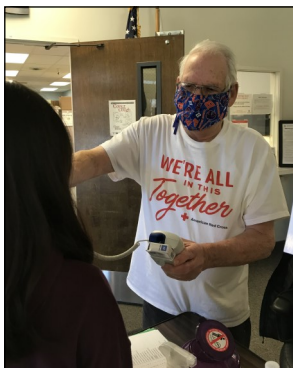
Then COVID-19 struck.

Lee "celebrated" his 82 birthday

in a local hospital with both the COVID-19 virus and pneumonia. But he recovered, and soon the Montgomerys had another celebratory event. They made the last payment on their house, and Lee decided he would try retirement again.

Staying at home and relaxing still did not suit him, so he decided to find a place to volunteer and put his time and energy to use. He

**SEE PLASMA, PAGE 2**



After spending his 82nd birthday in the hospital with COVID-19, Idaho volunteer Lee Montgomery recently donated convalescent plasma to help others seriously ill with the virus.

# Appreciation event, new staffers

Thanks to everyone who attended our virtual volunteer appreciation event earlier this month. More than 130 volunteers and paid staff joined us for an amazing night recognizing volunteer milestones and handing out some fun prizes.

If you weren't able to attend but still want to check it out, you can find a recording here: <https://youtu.be/JFrts9vCRFY>.

**WELCOME ABOARD:** Three new members have joined our team.



Romig

**Mike Romig** will be assisting with fleet, facilities and operations for Great Falls, Helena and Bozeman locations. He's based in Great Falls.

Prior to joining the Red Cross, Mike had extensive experience as a project



manager and contractor and was a locomotive engineer for 10 years. He has a bachelor of science degree in industrial technology.

**Lori Fons** has joined our fundraising team as our regional philanthropy officer.

Lori has been working as a philanthropy officer in the Wisconsin region for the past two years.

She has more than 20 years of experience in fund development and sales including as the development manager for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and as a sales



Fons

consultant with Neesvig's/Empire Fish.

Lori and her husband Kevin have two children, Erin, 23, and Brian, 20. She will be based out of Bozeman and starts on Jan. 9.

**Amanda Schmierer** takes the reins as our new volunteer engagement representative.

Amanda has built volunteer programs from the ground up and has connected thousands of volunteers to causes they are passionate about.



Schmierer

In 2018, she was awarded the Idaho Excellence in Volunteer Management Award and, in 2019, became one of only five people in Idaho to hold the designation of an internationally certified volunteer administrator.

She lives in Nampa with her husband.

# Plasma: Welcomes donors to drives

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found a position that pleased him — volunteering as a medical screener at Red Cross blood drives. He had given blood frequently while living in California and knew the good that donations could do. Now he works at putting people at ease and helping them sign in as they arrive to make their own gifts of blood.

He likes his volunteer work, and the Red Cross likes him. His is a welcome and familiar face at drives conducted all

over town, and he enjoys the camaraderie he feels when he's there helping. And he helps a lot — three to four times weekly.

When Lee heard about the convalescent plasma program designed to help seriously ill COVID-19 patients, he knew he wanted to be part of it. The convalescent plasma program involves providing antibody-rich plasma of those fully recovered from the disease to currently hospitalized patients.

Lee figured he was a perfect candidate and signed up to donate.

"If my pint of plasma will help another,

they are welcome to it," he said. "We have got to try everything we can to get ahead of this thing."

Lee plans to donate again very soon. Donating plasma doesn't take much longer than donating blood.

"Just come in and relax and let the machine do the work," Lee advises.

Those who have recovered from COVID-19 are eligible to donate convalescent plasma. Sign up to donate by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org/Plasma4COVID](https://RedCrossBlood.org/Plasma4COVID).

— Story by Red Cross writing team volunteer Ellie McKimmon

# Wildfire: Family thanks volunteers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ations of Worleys moved to the Roundup area just two years earlier. Besides Rose and her husband Stuart, their son John W. and his wife Tabitha also joined them. Both in their 30s, the young couple is raising 15-year-old Trent, 11-year-old Cheyane and 9-year-old Aiden.

Just one month before the fire, the eldest Worley, John D., joined the others in Montana to spend his retirement around family who could assist him with his health issues.

"He is 78 years old and worked construction all that time. That just takes its toll on your body," Rose said.

A cross-country trucker, Rose's husband, Stuart, wasn't in Montana when the fire began, so she took charge. Her son Johnny heard from a co-worker that Red Cross volunteers were on the scene in Roundup providing help.

Tabitha met with the Red Cross to gather information and figure out a safe place where the whole family could stay. The Red Cross team directed them to a Billings hotel where they were putting up evacuated families, so Rose began getting groceries and packing up important belongings.

"I was worried about the grandchildren seeing the flames as we rushed to get out," she said.

The family had horses, three cats and two dogs to worry about as well. Knowing the cats could take care of themselves outdoors, Rose set them loose

after getting the horses and dogs to safety.

"At that point you don't think about all your options and how things may turn out," she said.

Rose was delighted to learn that Red Cross would be feeding them while they were displaced. And after arriving at the hotel, they were relieved when discovering how much more assistance the Red Cross would provide.

In their rush to evacuate, they didn't grab the medicine they needed, but the Red Crossers arranged to have the correct prescriptions on hand.

Because John D. has a heart condition and typically uses an electric, rechargeable scooter that is quite bulky, the Worleys chose instead to pack his much smaller portable walker before heading out for Billings.

At the hotel, Rose, John D., Johnny, Tabitha and their three children spent three days in their two hotel rooms. They were itching to be outside, so they jumped at the chance to visit the Yellowstone River Trail in Billings. But Rose knew John couldn't go on the outing with just his walker.

So Rose called the Red Cross, telling them they were willing to purchase a wheelchair at Walmart but wanted to check with them first to see if they had medical equipment to loan.

That simple phone call to the Red Cross solved that problem.

"I told them, 'Don't go buy one. Let me see what we have in storage,'" said Abbra Firman, former Red Cross Disaster Program Manager for Eastern Mon-

tana.

"But we didn't have a wheelchair in our main storage area, so our volunteers went shopping for a brand-new folding wheelchair that a local store had on hand."

Volunteers Sherrilyn Hamilton and Rita Tucker delivered the wheelchair to the hotel where they assembled it.

"They called Rose telling her they had a surprise, and they needed to come down to the lobby," Firman said.

Rose said it was an emotional moment.

"Daddy had tears in his eyes when he saw the wheelchair," Rose said. "In Kentucky, you don't get this kind of help — and Daddy — he is humble.

"It was awesome to be outside. There is a walking trail, and Trent was able to push him all the way."

Red Cross also provided comfort to the young grandchildren. While the two children shared a hotel bed, they were able to cuddle up with a blanket they brought from home — one they received when completing a Red Cross program that taught children about being prepared for natural disasters.

Eventually, the family was able to return home.

"I'll be a lot more prepared next season," Rose said. "I wish I had had a better plan for the cats. It was terrible not knowing where they were, but when I found my kitty ... I held my kitty and just cried. I hadn't cried the whole time but holding the kitty did it."

— Story by Red Cross writing team volunteer Amy Joyner