

May 11 breakfast to explain local Red Cross mission

Free one-hour gathering at Hamilton Park Hotel also an appeal for funds during tight economic times

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FLORHAM PARK - The Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross will hold its annual “An Hour for the Red” breakfast from 9 to 10 a.m. Tuesday, May 11, at the Hamilton Park Hotel and Conference Center at 175 Park Ave. in Florham Park.

The free one-hour breakfast will serve as an opportunity for residents to learn about the programs and services of their local Red Cross chapter. Through presentations from clients and volunteers, the chapter will highlight its activities during the past year and conclude with an opportunity for attendees to make a donation to support the chapter’s work.

“Our event in May will mark the third year we have hosted this breakfast fundraiser,” said Chapter Executive Director Christy Hodde. “The breakfast is kept to one hour with a goal of presenting – in a powerful way – the impact our organization has on so many people and why donations from residents and businesses are critical. There is no other organization in the community that fulfills the specific role that is met by the Red Cross.”

There When Needed

During the past year the chapter’s Disaster Action Team (DAT), which is on call 24/7, assisted 27 families and sheltered 36 individuals experiencing a crisis. During a four-week period between January and February the DAT was called out to a multi-unit apartment in Long Hill Township to assist several families left in the bitter cold, and then responded to an eight-apartment fire in Springfield Township, providing hotel rooms and financial assistance for 15 residents.

In April, the DAT team responded to fires in Chatham Township and Florham Park in the same afternoon, assisting residents with shelter and mental health counseling.

More than 30 volunteers from the DAT team assisted Red Cross chapters in northern and central New Jersey who were responding to residents affected by the devastating floods that occurred in March.

“Our Disaster Action Team can only remain trained and ready to deploy with financial support from the community,” said Hodde. “Each year at our breakfast we have several organizations who take a leadership role with a generous financial contribution. This year, we recognize our Sliver Circle Sponsors Lois Schneider Realtor and Investors Savings Bank.”

“It is a comfort to know that the American Red Cross works so diligently and tirelessly to provide disaster relief and support to individuals and families facing a crisis,” said sponsor Lois Schneider. “We are fortunate to have such a worthwhile nonprofit organization in our area to contribute so much to our towns.”

Hodde added that the chapter is very grateful for the continued support of the Summit Medical Group in Berkeley Heights. “Not only is the Summit Medical Group supporting our breakfast as a financial donor, but their continued role as a community partner for many of our classes and presentations is an incredible asset,” Hodde said.

Health And Safety

Prevention is also a key component of the chapter's mission. Through its Health and Safety program, more than 18,000 people were taught such lifesaving skills as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), water safety and first aid. At this year's breakfast, attendees will hear from a Summit resident who attended a CPR/AED class on a Saturday, went to work on Monday and saved a life with the skills she had learned.

"Although the Colonial Crossroads is a relatively small chapter, I am proud of the impact we have made on the 10 communities in our service area," said Hodde. The chapter, with offices in Madison and Summit, also serves Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, Florham Park, East Hanover, Long Hill Township, Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Springfield Township.

"During March, proclamations were read by the mayors in all 10 of our towns announcing March as 'Red Cross Month'," Hodde noted. "I believe the leaders in our towns realize the integral part we play in serving their communities. It is a relationship of mutual respect and support."

Madison resident and board vice chairman Terry Brannin said, "The American Red Cross serves a critical need in our community. Just as we count on our firefighters and police to respond to a resident in distress, we need the Red Cross to provide this same emergency support in the form of shelter, financial assistance and emotional counseling. Our resources are stretched thin at the moment, and this jeopardizes our ability to continue our breadth of services."

Young And Old

Many seniors depend on the chapter to fill the gap in social services. The Colonial Crossroads Chapter provided more than 4,500 free rides to ambulatory seniors to medical appointments, and more than 4,100 meals were delivered to house-bound residents in conjunction with SAGE Eldercare, based in Summit. For the fourth year in a row, the chapter has received a Highly Performing Chapter rating, an award from the National American Red Cross.

East Hanover resident and volunteer staff aide Kathy DiNicolangelo said, "Working at the chapter has provided me with an opportunity to see firsthand how many people are helped by the Colonial Crossroads Chapter. From the residents who stop by to borrow wheelchairs and walkers or attend our free blood pressure screenings, to the youngsters who participate in our 'Scrubby Bear' hand washing program, we touch lives both young and old each day."

To become a sponsor of "An Hour for the Red" or to reserve a seat, call Director of Development and Marketing Elissa Cordrey at (908) 273-2076, ext. 18. For information about the chapter, visit www.ccnjredcross.org.