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### Trenton halts budget wars to pay tribute to Red Cross

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MADISON - "Red Cross Day" was celebrated from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, March 22, in Committee Room 3 of New Jersey's State House in Trenton, as representatives from all 15 New Jersey Red Cross chapters were on hand for a reading of a ceremonial resolution by state Senate President Stephen Sweeney, officially proclaiming March as "Red Cross Month."

The New Jersey resolution followed a proclamation signed by President Barack Obama on Feb. 24, declaring March as "Red Cross Month" across the nation.

"We are delighted and proud that our state government has officially recognized March as 'Red Cross Month,'" said Christy Hodde, executive director of the Colonial Crossroads Chapter, with chapter houses in Madison and Summit.

The chapter serves the communities of Madison, Summit, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, Florham Park, East Hanover, Long Hill Township, Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Springfield Township.

Hodde also serves as the State Representative for the Red Cross in New Jersey.

#### Proclaimed By Roosevelt

The origins of "Red Cross Month" date back to World War II, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first president to proclaim March as "Red Cross Month" and called on Americans to "rededicate themselves to the splendid aims and activities of the Red Cross."

During "Red Cross Month," chapters across the state thank their many volunteers and encourage residents to become involved in their local chapters either through volunteering, as blood donors, financial donors or by learning a life-saving skill such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), or first aid.

The humanitarian mission of the Red Cross is critically important, Hodde noted.

Last year, New Jersey chapters responded to 967 fires, floods, and other disasters, offering comfort and meeting the emergency needs of 1,634 families in crisis.

"Our Disaster Action Teams are on call 24/7," said Barbara Flynn, emergency services director for the Colonial Crossroads Chapter in Summit.

"There is no other community organization that fulfills this same role."

#### Joining Forces

While each chapter provides a Disaster Action Team to serve its community, the chapters also support one another to respond to large regional disasters.

When shelters are opened to accommodate residents during emergencies, volunteers from across the state will deploy to support the effort.

"Recent snow storms and power outages put our state to the test," said Arthur Samaras, emergency services director for the American Red Cross of Northern New Jersey. "By working together through our chapter network, we were able to meet the needs of thousands of people across the state."

The mission of the American Red Cross is not only to provide relief to victims of disasters, but also to help people prevent and prepare for emergencies. Through health and safety classes, New Jersey Red Cross chapters taught life-saving skills such as CPR, the use of an AED, water safety and First Aid to more than 185,600 individuals.

This June the American Red Cross will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its water safety and CPR programs. Whether it is the lifeguard on the beach watching children, or the stranger in the restaurant who performs CPR on someone experiencing cardiac arrest, the Red Cross is saving lives every day, Hodde said.

The Red Cross remains the premier collector of blood and blood products, and through chapter blood drives, New Jerseyans donated 113,378 pints of blood and 3,933 units of platelets last year. For every pint of blood donated, three lives may be saved – which translates into 340,134 lives that could have been saved through Red Cross blood collections last year.

### **Military Families**

An important part of the Red Cross, Hodde noted, is the support it provides military families serving far from home, and their loved ones. A cornerstone of the American Red Cross is its Service to the Armed Forces Program. Collectively, New Jersey chapters provided care and support to more than 3,900 military families and briefed more than 16,000 individuals on the types of assistance the Red Cross can provide through its "Get to Know Us Before You Need Us" presentations.

Red Cross chapters work locally, statewide, nationally and internationally. In one week in February, the Colonial Crossroads Chapter's Disaster Action Team responded to a multi-unit apartment fire, sheltering a dozen people, deployed a volunteer to Cape May to assist in shelters established following a blizzard, and sent a Creole-speaking volunteer to work as a translator on the USNS Comfort in Haiti.

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to survivors of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization, not a government agency, and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission.

For information, visit [www.ccnjredcross.org](http://www.ccnjredcross.org).