

Madison Red Cross to toast its mission with 'Oktoberfest' flair *Chapter notes fund-raising is crucial, but it can also be fun*

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The Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross will host its annual "Oktoberfest" from 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday Oct. 2, on the lawn at its Summit Chapter House at 695 Springfield Ave., offering a selection of imported and domestic beers, accompanying hors d'oeuvres with a German flair, music, and a sampling of fine wines.

The Red Cross chapter serves Summit, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, Florham Park, Madison, Long Hill Township, New Providence, Berkeley Heights and Springfield Township.

"We have extended the hours of this year's event so guests may stop by before dinner or come share a drink later in the evening," said Christy Hodde, the chapter's executive director. "Last year, we had more than 200 people at our wine tasting, which was held on the grounds of our Summit Chapter House. So many people enjoyed the opportunity to drink and dine under the stars that we decided to recreate the evening with a slightly different theme."

"Attending the 'Oktoberfest' is a fun way to support our local Red Cross chapter," said Madison Borough Council President Jeannie Tsukamoto.

"Many of us Madison residents are disappointed to see that the chapter is closing its facility in Madison," which was located at 1 Madison Ave. "However," Tsukamoto said, "I am encouraged to see that the chapter is reducing costs, streamlining programs and services and maximizing donor dollars by consolidating its operations in Summit, a much larger facility. The chapter will continue to provide critical services for Madison residents, just as it has for more than 90 years," said Tsukamoto, the Madison council's public safety liaison.

Donations Are Critical

"One of the challenges we face as an organization is to educate the public about how we are funded and what we need to do in order to 'keep the doors open' each day," explained chapter board chairman Terry Brannin of Madison.

"Most people have an awareness of the national American Red Cross in Washington, D.C., and the large fund-raising campaigns they undertake when responding to large-scale disasters such as Haiti (the catastrophic earthquake on Jan. 12).

"However, those national efforts do not impact our local chapter or our financial well being," Brannin pointed out.

"We have a mandate to support our services through events, mail solicitations, partnerships with community organizations – really anything we can do to generate financial donations. If you believe in the Red Cross and the importance of having a chapter in your community, attending our 'Oktoberfest' is a fun and worthwhile evening."

Response, Readiness

The Colonial Crossroads Chapter's Disaster Action Team played a critical role in many local, national and

even international emergencies over the past year.

Responding to house fires Chatham Township, Florham Park, Long Hill Township and Springfield Township, the team was on the scene offering temporary housing and mental health counseling. In addition, the team assisted other chapters during the spring floods that ravaged central and southern New Jersey.

The chapter is also committed to preventing tragedies. Through its "Be Red Cross Ready" program, participants learn specific steps to be prepared for an emergency. Through its Health and Safety program, more than 18,000 people were trained in such life-saving skills such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillators (AED,) first aid, water safety, babysitting training, and even dog and cat first aid.

"Oktoberfest" general admission tickets start at \$75. Sponsor tickets at \$125 and Patron tickets at \$150 provide admission and inclusion in the printed program for the event.

For tickets or sponsorship information, call Elissa Cordrey, director of development and marketing, at (908) 273-2076, ext. 18, or visit www.ccnjredcross.org.