



Everything Jersey

Summit Red Cross, Colonial Crossroads disaster team is ready for active hurricane season

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DURING THE DRILL â The Red Cross Colonial Crossroads Chapter Disaster Action Team drills. From left in row one, holding infant mannequin is Flo Rice of Madison. In row two, Janet Picillo of Madison, Dick Ash of New Providence, Brenda Ash of New Providence, Julie Siciliano of Madison, Joanne Corbo of Chatham Township, Pat Dolan of New Providence and Anna Novellino of Denville.

The Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross responded to 26 disasters this past year; offering temporary shelter, psychological first aid, mobile unit feeding, financial assistance and emergency personnel canteening. On Aug. 31, the team responded to a home fire in Long Hill Township. Most recently, The Colonial Crossroads Chapter responded to a four-alarm fire in Springfield on Friday, Sept. 3.

The chapter assisted 10 families who were displaced. Temporary housing was provided for seven of the families, along with financial assistance for food, clothing and other emergency-caused needs. The Colonial Crossroads Chapter is continuing to work with the 10 families to help with their ongoing recovery.

The team is currently preparing for the 2010 hurricane season which is predicted to be “active to extremely active” according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Director of Emergency Services Barb Flynn says, “Our team is well-skilled in responding to wide-ranging emergencies throughout our service area. Our hurricane season commenced on June 1 and will run through Nov. 30. It is important that everyone take the time to develop a preparedness kit and know what to do in the event of a power outage, home flooding or other emergency.”

Flynn also urges residents to check the website for hurricane preparedness tips at **ccnjredcross.org**.

During the past year, the team provided disaster relief support locally, statewide and internationally. The team was called out to support residents experiencing house fires in Chatham, Stirling, Springfield, Summit, Florham Park and Berkeley Heights.

“Often when someone has watched a fire consume their home, they struggle to make decisions and/or think about next steps,” says Flynn. “I think this is one of the most valuable services we provide — the ability to sit down with a client, provide compassion and empathy but also discuss how they can care for their family and who they should contact to move the recovery process forward.”

Close working relationships with emergency personnel, mayors and fire chiefs means that the Disaster Action Team can be on the scene promptly and take action immediately. “The volunteers of the Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross here in Summit are of vital importance to us when we are in the middle of an emergency in town,” says Summit Fire Chief Joseph Houck. “This group of individuals helps to care for the victims while we are dealing with the physical aspects of the emergency.”

Partnering with community organizations to share services, provide referrals and cover client needs is also a hallmark of the Red Cross. “We are committed to providing support for the immediate disaster-caused needs of our residents,” says Chapter Executive Director Christy Hodde.

“We are always exploring opportunities to enter into Memorandums of Understanding with other organizations and we did that with both the Junior League of Summit and Summit Supports Our Troops this past year. These formal relationships mean we are better able to meet the needs of a client and refer them to another agency that may be able to provide long-term support.”

The Disaster Team is fortunate to have several registered nurses who can replace lost prescriptions as well as disaster mental health specialists who have provided services during the past year, including working with families affected by the NJ floods ranging from families with some water damage to people left homeless; providing support for the community and parishioners during the tragedy at St. Patrick’s Church in Chatham Borough; creating a

support resource and psycho-educational session to people affected by the helicopter/plane crash over the Hudson last summer; and debriefing disaster relief volunteers when they returned from deployment to various disasters; providing support for the emergency service providers, witnesses, family, community and friends following a death due to house fire in our area; participating in a disaster drill for the Port Authority in Hoboken; and providing general mental health support to other communities and agencies.

The Colonial Crossroads Chapter will be mailing its fall solicitation in September and wants residents to know that the Chapter receives no government or national funding. To donate, visit **ccnjredcross.org**.

For information about Red Cross volunteer service, call 908-273-2076, ext. 29 or e-mail **flynnb@ccnjredcross.org**.

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