



**National Headquarters**  
American Red Cross  
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## Statement on Impartiality of American Red Cross Disaster Services

The American Red Cross, as a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, adheres to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Specifically, the Principle of Impartiality states, “It makes no discrimination based upon nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions. It endeavors to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.”

During a crisis, human beings need help to stay safe and sustain life, no matter what their nationality, cultural background or citizenship status. When an emergency happens, the Red Cross is going to deliver that help to whomever needs it, and as part of its humanitarian mission, the American Red Cross will feed, shelter, provide emotional support and other assistance without regard to race, religion, or citizenship status. The Red Cross is a charity, not a government agency and clients who have disaster-caused needs do not need to be American citizens to access Red Cross Services.

Red Cross workers will not question clients about their citizenship status, nor will they request birth certificates, immigration papers, passports, social security cards, or similar documents that could be interpreted as being used to identify the nationality or immigration status of persons seeking Red Cross assistance. Only such documents necessary to identify the individual or family as living in the disaster-affected area are required for Red Cross assistance. If federal, state or local authorities make a request to enter a shelter for the purpose of looking for undocumented shelter residents, the Red Cross will not grant them permission unless provided with a subpoena or court order. The Red Cross may disclose information about shelter residents at the behest of law enforcement if the disclosure is necessary to avert a threat or protect the health or safety of shelter occupants, another person or the community.

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September 9, 2008

# Happy 125th Birthday American Red Cross!

## 1881 – 2006



*Clara Barton* was 60 years old when she started the American Red Cross.

### Clara Barton, battlefield nurse starts American Red Cross

Before Clara Barton began the American Red Cross, she helped nurse soldiers on the battlefield during the Civil War. She brought them food and other supplies. Later she helped the families of missing soldiers find out what happened to them.

When Clara went to Europe on vacation in 1869, she found out about a new international organization called the Red Cross that helped wounded and sick soldiers in times of war. Because of her experiences during the Civil War, Clara was determined to bring the Red Cross idea back to America.

On May 21, 1881, Clara and a group of friends held the first meeting of the American Red Cross society in Washington, D.C. At the meeting Clara was chosen to be president of the society. She ran the organization for the next 23 years, leaving in 1904 at the age of 83!



The American Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865.

### Did you know that...?

- Clara was born on Christmas Day, December 25, 1821.
- Clara's parents sent her to boarding school when she was 9 because she was too shy.
- Clara became a school teacher at the age of 17.
- Clara was one of the first women to work for the federal government.
- Clara worked on the battlefields of three wars—the Civil War, 1861–1865; the Franco-Prussian War, 1870; and the Spanish-American War, 1898.

### Switzerland—where it all begins

The Red Cross began in Switzerland in 1863. It was the idea of a banker from Switzerland named Henri Dunant. In 1859, Henri Dunant was on a business trip in Italy and witnessed a large battle involving thousands of soldiers. When the battle was over, and the two armies marched away, they left behind 40,000 injured, sick and dying soldiers from both sides of the fight. Henri was shocked that these soldiers had been left behind. He forgot all about his business trip and decided to help organize the local townspeople to care for the men.

When he returned to his home town of Geneva, Switzerland, he wrote a short book about his experiences caring for the soldiers in Italy. He titled his book *A Memory of Solferino*, naming it after the town where the battle took place. The book contained an important idea that would change the world. In it Henri suggested there should be trained volunteers ready at times of crisis to help the injured no matter what nation they were from. That little book with the big idea was a great success and, at a meeting of a Geneva charity in 1863, Henri and four other men set up an organization to help wounded soldiers—it became the Red Cross.

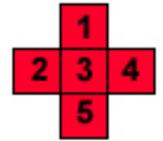


*Henri* is French for Henry.

A year later, another meeting took place in Geneva, Switzerland. This one included representatives from different countries from around the world. They met to establish a treaty between countries to protect injured soldiers on the battlefield. They also selected the official emblem for the new worldwide organization—a red cross on a white background. The treaty is now known as the Geneva Conventions.

### Did you know that...?

- The emblem for the worldwide Red Cross organization is a reverse of the Swiss flag.
- The red cross emblem is made up of five identical squares.
- Henri Dunant wore a beautiful white suit at the Battle of Solferino and was nicknamed “The Man in White” by the soldiers he helped.
- In 1901, Henri Dunant won the Noble Peace Prize – it was the first year the prize was awarded.
- He also helped to found the international YMCA.



**American  
Red Cross**

### The American Red Cross Blood Services—Saving Lives Everyday

*Blood donors* are people who volunteer to give their blood to help others.

Every two seconds someone in America needs a blood transfusion. For more than 50 years, the American Red Cross has been collecting blood from people who volunteer to give it to be used for patients who have suffered significant blood-loss from accidents like car crashes or have life-threatening illnesses like cancer.

The Red Cross blood program started as a relief effort to provide lifesaving plasma and blood during World War II. The American Red Cross collects and distributes nearly half the nation’s blood to hospitals.



Across the country, schools bear the name of Dr. Charles R. Drew as a tribute him.

#### Dr. Charles R. Drew

Today's Red Cross blood program is the result of Dr. R. Charles Drew, an African-American blood specialist, surgeon, educator and scientist. His pioneering work in blood collection, plasma processing and transfusion laid the foundation for modern blood banking.

Blood is made up of four basic parts: red blood cells, white blood cells, plasma and platelets. A blood bank is where human blood is tested, separated into its basic parts like red blood cells and then stored until it’s needed by a patient.

- *Plasma* is a clear, yellow liquid that carries blood cells and other substances through the body.
- *Red blood cells* carry oxygen and remove carbon dioxide
- *White blood cells* fight infection
- *Platelets* help blood clot (like when a scab forms).

A *blood transfusion* is a medical procedure that takes blood from one person and gives it to another person who needs it, like someone who is having an operation or has been hurt in an accident.

### The American Red Cross in Wartime

The American Red Cross has been assisting the U.S. military and civilians during wartime since 1898. During the Spanish American War of 1898, Clara Barton sailed to the island of Cuba bringing nurses medical supplies and food for the wounded American soldiers and civilians.

*Armed Forces, troops* and *military* are all names for the same groups of men and women who work in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines.  
*Civilians* are people who are not part of the military.



Junior Red Crossers in Texas during World War I.

Today the Junior Red Cross members are called *American Red Cross Youth Volunteers*. Contact your Red Cross chapter to get involved.

During World War I and World War II school-aged volunteers called the Junior Red Cross helped the military by making hand-crafted games and other items like knitted mufflers. Today the Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services (AFES) continues the tradition of providing services to U.S. forces and their families wherever they are.

### Relief from Disasters Large and Small

The very first disaster Clara Barton's new American Red Cross responded to was a forest fire in the state of Michigan in 1881. 125 people died and thousands were left homeless. Newly formed Red Cross chapters collected food and supplies to relieve the suffering of people who had lost everything in the fire.

Other famous disasters the American Red Cross has responded to over the years are the Johnstown Flood of 1889 that killed over 2,000 people, the Midwest tornadoes of 1947 that left thousands homeless and the attacks of September 11, 2001 where 57,206 Red Cross workers – both paid staff and volunteers – from across the country mobilized to provide disaster relief.

The Red Cross responds to about 70,000 disasters a year – one disaster every eight minutes – ranging from individual house fires to huge natural disasters like hurricanes. Whether the disaster is large or small, you'll find the Red Cross providing emergency shelter, food and other support to the victims.

The American Red Cross disaster response to the people affected by a series of hurricanes between August and October of 2005—providing emergency food, water and shelter during and after the storms—was the *largest response to a natural disaster* in the organization's 125 year history.



*Red Cross Chapters* are local offices that provide disaster relief, training and other services in communities across the United States.

### Helping Around the World

The American Red Cross has always been ready to help people in need around the world. This help began in the 1890s when Clara Barton's Red Cross sent tons of wheat, corn and medical supplies to Russia during a famine.

A *famine* happens when farmers cannot produce enough crops to feed everyone.



A *vaccine* is a special type of medicine that protects your body from a disease.

The American Red Cross is still helping people around the world. For example, the Red Cross is helping thousands of children in Africa to get a vaccine that prevents a sickness called measles. Measles is a disease that, if not prevented, spreads quickly for child to child and causes high fevers, rashes and sometimes death.

Children in the United States are given the measles vaccine through a shot given by their doctor to keep them from ever catching it. Today, students in America are helping the Red Cross raise money to help pay for measles shots for schoolchildren in Africa. These shots will protect African children from the disease and help save their lives too.

## What YOU Can Do to Prepare for a Disaster Large or Small

- With the assistance of an adult build an emergency supply kit and keep it handy. Your kit should contain the following items:
  - Water and ready-to-eat foods or meals that don't spoil including canned meats, fruits and vegetables; also, canned juices and energy foods like granola bars or dried fruit like raisins, etc. are good for emergencies. Don't forget a non-electric can opener!
  - A flashlight, batteries and battery-powered radio
  - First Aid supplies (bandages, antiseptics)
- Make an emergency plan with your family—include escape routes for every room and pick a place to meet together after you get outside.
- Take a first aid or water-safety class at your local Red Cross chapter.

## Puzzles, Games and Activities

### *Be Ready for a Disaster* Red Cross Word Search

Can you find all the different words related to preparing for a disaster? Circle all the different words you can find. Remember the words can be up down or on the diagonal.

E	F	E	M	E	R	G	E	N	C	Y	P	L	A	N
R	E	N	E	P	O	N	A	C	B	R	G	R	U	O
U	O	W	M	U	I	T	R	A	E	X	C	Z	J	X
E	A	B	X	I	H	D	T	T	F	B	P	A	E	K
S	H	P	P	D	J	T	A	W	O	C	C	Y	V	D
F	X	D	E	Q	E	W	L	Y	M	M	T	T	Y	C
O	L	M	I	R	Y	J	T	B	E	F	T	J	M	A
A	N	A	I	A	R	T	Q	V	V	R	N	Y	D	N
H	A	E	S	Y	T	W	A	I	W	E	S	B	A	N
Q	S	D	T	H	W	S	N	Q	C	T	T	F	L	E
F	F	Y	F	E	L	Q	R	Y	P	P	E	H	D	D
B	X	B	E	C	X	I	B	I	L	A	P	P	W	F
V	L	G	J	D	N	K	G	V	F	H	C	T	K	O
C	U	E	E	T	F	I	X	H	Z	C	J	P	C	O
R	O	G	S	Q	X	Z	H	L	T	R	C	A	N	D

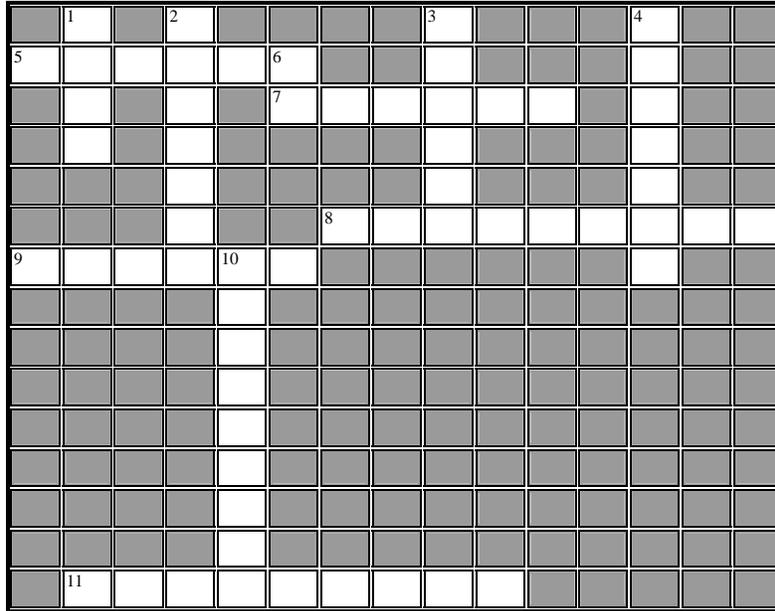
BATTERIES  
CANNED FOOD  
CAN OPENER  
CHAPTER  
EMERGENCY PLAN  
FIRST AID  
FLASHLIGHT  
WATER



- **Ditty Bag Craft Project** – these small bags made by volunteers at Red Cross chapters were given out to soldiers and sailors. Ditty bags contained personal items such as combs, sewing kits, shoe laces and shaving cream and razors. Instructions at: <http://redcross.org/museum/images/DittyBagInstructions.pdf>

▪ Red Cross *Crossword*

Read the clues and solve the following crossword to test what you have read.



**ACROSS**

- 5. An agreement between governments
- 7. Started the worldwide Red Cross Movement
- 8. Helps to form blood clots
- 9. City where Red Cross movement began
- 11. Type of storm causing wide-spread damage

**DOWN**

- 1. Blood banking pioneer
- 2. Medicine that protects your body from disease
- 3. Clear yellow part of blood
- 4. A disease Red Cross is trying to prevent in Africa
- 10. What youth can do at their local chapter

**Books for Young Readers**

Here are a few books for young readers...

- *Young Clara Barton: Battlefield Nurse* – Sarah Alcott  
Troll Communications, 1996; 32 pages
- *Be Ready 1-2-3* - Oregon Trail Chapter of the American Red Cross  
American National Red Cross, 1992; 34 pages
- *The Big Wave* - Pearl S. Buck  
New York: Harper Collins Children's Books, reprinted, 1986. Paperback, 57 pages.
- *Stubby: Brave Soldier Dog* - Richard and Sally Glendinning  
Garrard Publishing, Company, 1978; 48 pages

For more books about the American Red Cross, natural disasters and Red Cross people, visit the Red Cross Web site at [www.redcross.org/museum/exhibits/readinglist\\_yth.asp](http://www.redcross.org/museum/exhibits/readinglist_yth.asp)

**Test Your Red Cross I.Q.**

1. Who founded the American Red Cross?
2. What was the first disaster that the American Red Cross responded to?
3. Who helped start the first American Red Cross blood bank?
4. Where did the American Red Cross first assist U.S. soldiers?
5. How is the Red Cross helping children in Africa?

Answer Key:  
 1. Clara Barton  
 2. Michigan forest fires  
 3. Charles Drew  
 4. Cuba  
 5. By providing measles vaccines.

## A Red Cross Timeline - What Happened and When

Here are some important milestones in the history of the Red Cross.

- 1821 Clara Barton is born on December 25 in Oxford, Massachusetts
- 1859 Henri Dunant organizes volunteers to help wounded soldiers after the Battle of Solferino
- 1861 Clara Barton begins her relief work with Union soldiers in the Civil War
- 1862 Dunant's book *A Memory of Solferino* is published
- 1864 The first Geneva Convention is adopted to protect sick and wounded soldiers on the battlefield. Red Cross emblem established.
- 1869 Clara Barton finds out about the Red Cross while on vacation in Switzerland
- 1881 Clara Barton and friends establish the American Red Cross. The new American Red Cross undertakes its first disaster relief effort aiding victims of Michigan forest fires.
- 1889 Red Cross responds to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood
- 1891 First time American Red Cross sends international relief to famine victims in Russia
- 1898 Clara Barton sails to Cuba with supplies for victims of Spanish-American War.
- 1900 Red Cross responds to devastating hurricane and tidal wave hit Galveston, Texas. The disaster killed some 6,000 people
- 1909 American Red Cross begins first aid program
- 1914 Water safety program begins
- 1917 President Woodrow Wilson calls on youth to join the newly formed Junior Red Cross
- 1941 Red Cross begins National Blood Donor Service to collect blood for the U.S. military with Dr. Charles R. Drew, as medical director
- 1950–53 American Red Cross expands its blood program for the military during the Korean War.
- 1968 480 Red Cross staff serve with the military during the Vietnam War
- 1974 CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) is introduced as a Red Cross program.
- 1987 Red Cross opens new blood research laboratory
- 1991 Elizabeth Dole becomes the first woman president of the American Red Cross since Clara Barton
- 2001 More than 50,000 Red Cross volunteers respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York, at the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania.
- 2004 Southeast Asian Tsunami of December 26, 2004 the largest international natural disaster in history, Red Cross provides shelter to 87,880 people.

*A complete timeline of Red Cross history* is available at [www.redcross.org/museum/history/timeline.asp](http://www.redcross.org/museum/history/timeline.asp), and a list of 100 important dates in Red Cross history can be found at its web site at [www.redcross.org/museum/pdfs/100dates.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/museum/pdfs/100dates.pdf).