

Siuslaw News Coast Life

SENIOR NEWS CALENDAR

INSIDE — 8B



Ready for action

Florence Red Cross volunteers help disaster victims

Upcoming cold weather will result in a new task for local folks — keeping their homes warm. Sometimes this results in creative ways of generating heat.

Unfortunately, this creativity may yield negative results: A house fire and a loss of one's possessions.

When a house fire occurs in Florence, the local American Red Cross organization is notified. Red Cross Disaster Action Team (DAT) volunteers respond to the fire and assist affected residents by providing temporary housing, clothing, food, medications and mental health referrals.

The Florence Red Cross DAT team is made up of eight volunteers, five of whom currently respond to emergency calls, one who handles team paperwork and two new arrivals who are awaiting approval to respond to calls.

DAT members have been trained in CPR, first aid, disaster assessment, sheltering and mass feeding.

Several volunteers have been deployed to national disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, Super Storm Sandy, the Oso landslide and fires across the country.

"We're always looking for people who are interested in joining our team," said Tom Zahara, who heads up the Florence group.

In addition to responding to house fires, local Red Cross members work with Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to provide information on preparedness in case of an earthquake or tsunami in our area.

The DAT team also is a member of the Western Lane Emergency Operations Group (WLEOG) and works with ARES, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service organization of ham radio operators.

In the event of a large-scale disaster, the Florence Red Cross has agreements in place with various facilities, such as churches and schools, to be used for sheltering if the need arises.

There are also agreements with local motels and hotels for temporary housing needed for victims of disasters such as house fires.

Two Red Cross trailers are located in the Florence area, one on each side of the Siuslaw bridge. These trailers contain supplies such as cots, blankets, water and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) that can be put into service in an emergency.

Citizens, businesses and nonprofit groups that would like more information on being prepared can schedule a "Prepare!" presentation by contacting DAT team member Linda Stent at 541-991-3161.

The American Red Cross suggests that each family have a plan in place in case of disaster. This involves being able to let family and friends know that everyone is safe.

The American Red Cross Safe and Well website www.safeandwell.communityos.org is an online resource for people in disaster areas in the United States to register their current status and for their loved ones to access that information. It helps provide displaced families with relief and comfort during a stressful time and allows concerned friends and family to search the list of those who have registered.

Each year, the American Red Cross immediately responds to about



Florence American Red Cross Disaster Action Team (DAT) Linda Stent, Michael Titmus, Pat Beckham, Candy Zahara, Tom Zahara, Bev Titmus, Ken Stone and Sue Beckham

COURTESY PHOTO

70,000 natural and man-made disasters in the United States, ranging from fires to hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hazardous materials spills, transportation accidents and explosions.

Red Cross disaster relief focuses on meeting people's immediate emergency needs caused by disaster. When disaster threatens or strikes, the Red Cross provides shelter, food and health and emotional health services to address basic human needs and assist individuals and families in resuming their normal daily activities independently.

The Red Cross also feeds emergency workers like firefighters and police, handles inquiries from concerned family members outside the disaster area, provides blood and blood products to disaster victims, provides access to other available resources and can offer emergency assistance for military members currently serving on active duty.

The relationship between the Red

Cross and the persons who come for service is confidential.

The Red Cross was chartered by the U.S. Congress to "carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply the same in mitigating the sufferings caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same."

The Charter is unique to the Red Cross because it assigns duties and obligations to the nation, to disaster survivors and to the people who generously support its work through donations.

The American Red Cross is currently involved in a national Home Fire Preparedness Campaign, which aims to reduce injuries and deaths caused by home fires by installing free smoke alarms.

The Florence Red Cross plans to bring this campaign to the area in the future by installing free smoke

alarms and sharing fire safety information with residents.

Eighty percent of Americans don't realize that home fires are the single most common disaster across the nation.

With average heating costs rising, the Red Cross warns families to understand the dangers of home fires and to take steps now to get prepared.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, 20,000 people are injured in house fires in a typical year.

The U.S. Fire Administration has determined that heating fires are the second leading cause of residential fires, after cooking fires. Heating fires are fires that are caused by functioning or malfunctioning central heating units, fixed or portable local heating units, fireplaces, chimneys and water heaters.

The Red Cross advises taking steps now to ensure safety and prevent loss of life and property.

—Submitted by Linda Stent

Want to help?

The Florence American Red Cross is hosting a "meet your local Red Cross team" event on Monday, Oct. 26, at noon in the meeting room at Pacific Pines RV Park, 4044 Highway 101 (enter on 42nd Street).

Anyone interested in more information about the Disaster Action Team (DAT) and its team members is invited to attend this come-and-go session.

DAT members will be available to discuss volunteer opportunities and disaster preparedness. Materials will be available and light refreshments will be served.

For more information or to inquire about joining DAT, contact Tom Zahara at tomograms@yahoo.com or 541-999-2728 or Linda Stent at 541-991-3161.

How 'bout demArts?

Local artists celebrate National Arts and Humanities Month at demonstration event

Siuslaw Public Library sponsored the second annual demArts on Saturday for National Art and Humanities Month in October. More than 20 area artists working in fiber, paints, pastels, collage, beads and other media led "create and take" demonstrations for the more than 150 visitors of all ages who attended the event. This day-long salute to the arts and humanities was conducted in partnership with the BeauxArts Fine Art Materials, Florence Area Beaders group, the Florence Miniature Club, Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA), Friends of the Library, Kenneth B. Gallery, the Siuslaw Fiber Arts Guild and the Siuslaw Public Library Art Committee. Event Coordinator Mary Colgan-Bennetts said that this year's demArts went "fantastically" and that some people stayed to make art for the whole day.



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