



**American
Red Cross**

Monroe County Chapter



Where we've been and where *we're* going.

here is our story

The International Red Cross Movement, was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1859 to provide services that alleviate suffering during armed conflict. Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross (ARC) in 1881 and added peacetime disaster relief services to the Red Cross mission. In 1905, the U.S. Congress mandated that the ARC provide international relief services during armed conflicts, provide disaster relief services and be the only provider of emergency communication for the armed forces. In addition to providing these core services, many of the 900 existing chapters provide additional community services as well - **without any government funding!**

A committee of future "Red Crossers" was formed in 1881 to respond to the Forest Fires in the Bad Axe, Michigan area. The Monroe County Chapter was chartered on April 30, 1915. Our programs have evolved over the **95 years of service** but the concern for our community has always been consistent and vigilant. Early on, the chapter raised funds to assist with starvation in Mexico, recruited nurses to do public health home visits and established a medical supplies and an equipment loan program. During World War I, our chapter responded to the needs created by the war by establishing groups to make surgical dressings, garments, bandages and other knitted items. School children and teachers helped and made scrapbooks and puzzles for convalescing soldiers. These youth volunteers became known as the "Junior Red Cross".

From 1923 to 1933, the ARC took the lead in providing health services nationwide. Volunteer nurses operated chest clinics to check for tuberculosis, made home visits for child immunizations and assisted new mothers with newborn care. Health education was promoted further in 1930 and 1931 with the advent of first aid, water safety instruction and other life saving skills courses. During the Great Depression, our chapter distributed flour and cracked wheat, milk, potatoes and other vegetables to the needy and 500 volunteers produced and distributed ready-made garments. During World War II, emergency messages were transmitted to U.S. Armed Forces and local school children made scrapbooks with cartoons to send to them. In July 1956, the chapter became an active participant in the blood services program and in August, the first Monroe County blood drive was held at St. Paul's Methodist Church. Presently, the chapter is a part of the Western Lake Erie Blood Region, based out of Toledo, Ohio.

The 1960's and 1970's brought numerous emergencies throughout the county including the tornadoes in the Lost Peninsula area in 1965 and flooding along Lake Erie in 1966. The chapter partnered with IHM sisters to host disaster training courses and blood drives, conducted mock disaster drills, and assisted local families to make audiotapes to send to community service members involved in the Vietnam Conflict. The chapter moved from the Sawyer House on Front Street to the Harry L. Rauch memorial building (the former Rupp Funeral Home) on the corner of Macomb and Second Street. Emergency service response and training continued into the 1980's. Significant flooding occurred in 1982 along the River Raisin and along the Lake Erie coastline in 1985. Disaster Action Teams (DAT), a new system of disaster response, was implemented to respond to common fire disaster events. During this time, health and safety training increased, bringing more awareness to the benefits of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Taking the lead in HIV/AIDS education programs, the chapter founded an HIV/AIDS Awareness Council and a local youth leadership group "Youth Health Advocates of Monroe" (YHAM) was established to be peer educators. In 1997, YHAM became "Reaching Out with Caring and Kindness" (ROCK). As an award-winning youth leadership group they focus on helping seniors and developmentally delayed youth. In January 1997, the chapter responded to the COMAIR plane crash in Raisinville Township and a month later responded to a 50-unit apartment fire, the largest fire in the chapter's history. In 1998, to meet the needs into the 21st century, the chapter moved to a newly renovated building on North Dixie Highway. In 1999, the chapter launched new health and safety training programs promoting the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AED) that dramatically save the lives of heart attack victims. In 2002, the chapter was awarded a 2-year Southeast Michigan Foundation grant to provide free AED training to county residents.

In response to the terrorist tragedies of September 11, 2001, the chapter processed and forwarded over \$300,000 to the national Red Cross' 9/11 disaster relief efforts and sent 8 local disaster volunteers. The events of 9/11 presented the biggest challenges in Red Cross history - both locally and nationally. During a 6 month period, from December 2004 to June 2005, our chapter responded to 120 local disasters - double the number of average annual disaster incidents! In December 2004, the Southeast Asian Tsunami became the largest International Red Cross response ever with over \$2 billion raised. Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005 and over 90,000 square miles were devastated in the Gulf Coast Region, becoming the largest natural disaster event in U.S. history. Our chapter raised and forwarded over \$300,000 to disaster relief efforts, trained 200 new disaster volunteers, sent 59 of them to assist with hurricane relief efforts and gave emergency assistance to thirty evacuee families who fled to our county. **These events raised the bar in disaster preparedness, planning and response forever.**

A new Red Cross "Be Red Cross Ready" initiative was launched in 2007 to teach residents how to plan for and respond to any type of disaster. Through an \$85,000 fundraising campaign in 2008, the chapter purchased an emergency response vehicle and a mobile storage trailer which holds shelter supplies, and computerized the Health Services Department. In March 2009, the River Raisin flooded once again and the chapter responded with clean up kits for families. In 2009, the chapter reached the 8000 unit mark for blood donations, launched our updated website www.arc-monroe.org, and entered the world of social media - spreading our mission message in new, creative ways.

Today's fast-paced 21st century world demands innovation in preparing for and responding to emergencies. Our challenge is teaching life saving skills to busy people, educating others that donating blood is safe and is still needed every day, and reminding people that preparing for the unexpected is priceless in the event of all types of disasters. Even in today's era of advanced technology, nothing takes the place of the reassuring Red Cross voice to a worried military family. Teaching youth emergency preparedness and response as well as the importance of becoming caring community leaders for tomorrow is paramount. **The American Red Cross of Monroe County continues to provide lifesaving blood services, health and safety training services, disaster relief services and emergency communications for military families every day.**