

The American Red Cross: Over a Century of Service

VOLUNTEERISM BY WILMA PALMER

Can you imagine the expression on Clara Barton's face if she was able to visit a Red Cross Chapter today? Ms. Barton is credited with forming the American Red Cross (ARC) in 1881. Her efforts were based on the work of Dr. Henry Dunant of Switzerland, who in 1859 first called for a relief effort to bring aid to those injured in battle.

Nearly 130 years later, the American Red Cross mission and fundamental principles remain unchanged. The Red Cross is a humanitarian organization working around the clock to alleviate suffering, bring hope and help to disaster victims. The types of struggles have multiplied as our society has evolved.

Our humanitarian mission has remained a constant, as has our need for volunteers. "There's always a need for volunteers," stated Blanche Hudon, Director of Volunteer Services for the Central NC Chapter (CNC). "Some folks volunteer for a few months and some for several years. Every volunteer plays a vital role in helping us fulfill our mission."

The Central NC Chapter of the American Red Cross, comprised of Durham, Granville, Orange, Person and Vance Counties serves over 500,000 residents. Programs focus on education and prevention as well as response to disasters. Some volunteers can be found in the classroom teaching CPR to adults and youth. Water Safety may be taught in your local schools or at the community pool. Individuals can donate blood or platelets, helping to ensure that our hospitals are adequately supplied with life-saving blood. Disaster training courses prepare volunteers to serve as responders to local emergencies such as a fire or tornado. The opportunity to continue building skills allows volunteers to train to be deployed to any area of our country in the event of an emergency.

For those who would like to volunteer, but desire a lesser time commitment, there is a need for volunteers at local blood drives working as greeters and canteen workers. Individuals in the Durham area can also assist in transporting individuals in need of transportation

to medical appointments. And, in this difficult economy, some adults choose to volunteer while simultaneously job-hunting. "This can be," says Mark Innocenzi, interim chapter operations director at the CNC Chapter, "a "win-win" situation. The efforts of these potentially short-term volunteers are a tremendous help to the ARC and it is hopefully an opportunity for the volunteers to feel productive during a stressful time in their life."

Mr. Henry Halbert, the Central NC Chapter's senior volunteer was asked how long he had been an ARC volunteer and he stated he had volunteered for "100 years." Well, not quite. He's volunteered for 65 years. Mr. Halbert taught ARC First Aid classes to soldiers when he was a medic in WWII. He has volunteered in both New Jersey and North Carolina. Currently he averages working at two to three blood drives each week in the RTP area. "I enjoy talking to the people coming in (to the blood drive)," said

Mr. Halbert. I ask them what they do in this building, and after they explain, I still don't know!" said Mr. Halbert.

Boom! readers in the central NC area who are interested in volunteering can go to the Central NC Chapter's website (centralnorthcarolina.redcross.org) to sign up for volunteer orientation where they will have a chance to learn more about the opportunities available. Readers in the Raleigh area may find it more convenient to volunteer through the Triangle Chapter (triangleredcross.org).

Most likely, Clara Barton would be amazed at the growth of the American Red Cross. She would be gratified to learn that our logo, which is the Swiss flag inverted, is recognized world-wide as a symbol of assistance and support. And while the writer can't speak for Clara Barton, it is hard to imagine that she would be anything other than deeply touched by the hundreds of people across our country who donate their time, energy, and financial resources to support the efforts of the American Red Cross.

Wilma Palmer is the blood services coordinator for the Orange County branch of the Central NC Chapter of the American Red Cross.



Henry Halbert volunteers at a local blood drive.

North Carolina University Women Present at the United Nations

On February 23, 2011 four North Carolina university women, nominated by WomenNC, spoke at the United Nations' 55th Annual "Commission on the Status of Women" (CSW). These selected fellowship candidates presented research findings on topics including Sex Trafficking, Access to Reproductive Health, Violence Prevention in Higher Education, and Immigrant Girl Workers in North Carolina.

The U.N. Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 with the goal of promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. The two-week annual CSW event in New York City draws government representatives, 400+ non-governmental organizations (NGOs), students, and women's organizations from around the world; an estimated 6,000 people attended this year.

WomenNC, headquartered in Raleigh, evolved from the deep seated interest in women's human rights issues, highlighted at the Commission on the Status of Women. 2011 is the second year WomenNC has sponsored a panel of North Carolina women at CSW meetings. In parallel, WomenNC engages in efforts to encourage US Senate ratification of the CEDAW treaty (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women).

Consideration for a CSW Fellowship requires applicants to propose a research study on a specific women's issue in North Carolina, investigate supportive programs and suggest methods to ameliorate the current challenge. WomenNC promoted the program to twelve North Carolina universities and colleges and received a pool of competitive applicants.

WomenNC CSW Fellows, Katie Starr (NC State) along with Annie Clark, Kimmie Garner and Kristen Brugh (from UNC Chapel Hill), presented their research findings in New York to a packed house in the Hardin Room, Church Center. Accompanying them were Moderator, Joanne Hershfield (Professor and Women's Studies Chair, UNC Chapel Hill) and WomenNC founder, Beth Dehghan. WomenNC's process of integrating university women to study local issues and suggest improvements has been commended and shared as a model approach with many participating CSW organizations.

In addition to presenting their topics, WomenNC Fellows were invited by the US CSW delegation to a discussion entitled, "Changing Mindsets: New Approaches to Advance Women and Girls in Science", hosted by a Brazilian and Indian delegate panel. From the many sessions they attended, the CSW Fellows gathered feedback and additional approaches to addressing women's issues. They will report back to several North Carolina community groups.

In preparation for their U.N. presentation, the CSW Fellows shared their research on February 3, 2011, with 185+ persons from an impressive array of North Carolina regional business, organizations, universities and governmental dignitaries. The presentation and dinner affair was held at the Women's Club of Raleigh clubhouse, who hosted the event with WomenNC and Urban Foods.

Notable attendees included Brad Miller (North Carolina US Representative), Michael Molloy (former Canadian Ambassador to Jordan), Elaine Marshall (NC Secretary of State), Gabriela Zabala, (Director, Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs, reporting Governor Beverly Perdue), and Lindy Brown (former Wake County Commissioner). The significant turnout indicated strong encouragement for these North Carolina representatives in their pursuit to address difficult scenarios and proposals for improved women's conditions in our community and worldwide.

The experience realized by these university women at the United Nations, combined with their research and the diverse people they encountered, has been an empowering and life changing opportunity.

For more information on WomenNC CSW Fellowship Presentations & Bios, CEDAW treaty & public support, visit WomenNC.org, womennc.blogspot.com/ or contact Beth Dehghan, executive director at 919.744.4778, beth.dehghan@womennc.org | United Nations, CSW: un.org/womenwatch/darw/csw/55sess.htm#news | WomenNC and The Woman's Club of Raleigh, Inc. are 501(c) (3) non-profit, volunteer civic organizations.