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Volunteer Services



Programs

The following are examples of programs and activities a few of our Red Cross chapters offer for persons with disabilities. We encourage you to contact your local chapter to find out what programs are offered in your community or to find out how you can establish a new program.

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[Gallaudet University Supports Disaster Mental Health Services](#)

For the past eight months, Dr. Diane Morton, a professor in the Department of Counseling at Gallaudet University, has been working with the American Red Cross to develop a partnership in the provision of disaster mental health services for people who are deaf in the United States.

A first step in this project was the training of licensed Gallaudet mental health faculty and staff on December 10 and 11. The training will prepare this group to use its professional skills to meet the disaster-related needs of people who are deaf and their families, if needed.

Subsequent to this training, Morton and a small working group consulted with the American Red Cross to develop further opportunities nationwide to expand the disaster services program for people who are deaf. Training for mental health professionals will also take place at the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association conference in May, and through the Gallaudet Regional Centers next year.

The ultimate goal is establishing a nationwide network and database of professionals who can respond in disaster and emergency situations, through the American Red Cross, to assist people who are deaf and their families.

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[Persons with Visual Impairments](#)

Mid-South Chapter, Memphis, Tennessee. Fifteen teens who are blind or visually impaired became certified babysitters when the Mid-South Chapter, for the first time, taught its popular babysitting course at the Memphis City Schools Summer Camp for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The chapter was contacted by the Camp's coordinator, who expressed an interest in the course because many of the youth cared for younger siblings and would greatly benefit from babysitter's training.

Kathi Cormier, Coordinator of Youth Programs at the Mid-South Chapter, sent the course materials to the camp in advance so the materials could be enlarged and also translated into Braille. Lynne Eicher, the babysitting instructor who taught the course, was up to the challenge as well. "I simply approached

the class the same way I approach all my other classes-by asking who my students are and what their needs are," Eicher said. "When I was told that my students were blind or visually impaired, I simply used a more hands-on approach to teach the skills of the course."

Cormier is excited about the prospect of holding more classes for physically challenged individuals. "The success of this course," she said, "proves that American Red Cross services and programs can truly benefit everyone."

For more information, contact Toni Webster, volunteer coordinator, Mid-South Chapter, at (901) 726-2690; e-mail webstert@crossnet.org.

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Braille Transcription Service

Midway-Kansas Chapter, Wichita, KS. Six volunteers currently participate in a 35-year old Midway-Kansas Chapter program, translating material into Braille. Volunteers transcribe more than 12,000 pages of Braille each year-primarily textbooks for students from kindergarten to graduate school. Besides textbooks, personal and business requests are filled as time permits. The chapter provides the one-year training and Library of Congress certification in Braille transcription for new volunteers.

"If volunteers were not used, Braille readers and schools would not be able to afford the materials they need to educate," said Braille Transcription manager Von Eulert. "The only risks involved are if we accept more assignments that we can fill in a timely manner."

Transcribers work initially assists students in Kansas. Once translated, the materials are registered with the American Printing House for the Blind, who makes copies of transcribed texts available to any English Speaking country.

Volunteers can translate English, Spanish, French and mathematics and science texts, and then they bind the materials on-site. The Midway-Kansas Chapter has developed Braille codes for Ancient Numerations systems, Calculator Notation and Chemistry Notation. Chapter volunteers helped develop a manual on the Mathematics Code for teachers of blind students. All of these codes have been approved and published by The Braille Authority of North America (the final authority for Braille codes and usage).

For additional information, contact Von E. Eulert, Braille Transcription manager, Midway-Kansas Chapter, at (316) 683-6706, e-mail veulert@aol.com.

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Aquatics Program for Persons with Disabilities

Greater Toledo Area Chapter. Adults and children with disabilities, as well as American Red Cross Water Safety Instructors, are reaping the benefits of the Greater Toledo Area Chapter's Aquatics Program for Persons with Disabilities. The program attracts more than 15,000 Toledo-area participants each year.

Most participants are adults from retirement communities and hospitals in the Toledo area. Once these individuals enroll in the first course, they tend to stay with the program because they get exercise and become part of a social group.

More than 75 children ages 3 to 10 also participate—up from the ten preschoolers with autism who enrolled in the first Children and Preschool class six years ago. All of the students have challenges in the areas of autism, sight or hearing, or are in a special care facility due to physical or mental abuse. The program teaches not only water safety skills but also social skills such as using a locker room, dressing and showering, participation in a classroom setting, and improved interaction with adults.

The Greater Toledo Area Chapter's Aquatics Program for Persons with Disabilities promotes enjoyment and personal achievement. The sense of achievement applies to every age group and every program. After completing the sessions, adults are not fearful of water or of exercise, and children and parents are able to "play" in the water in ways that they could not on land due to sensory issues.

The Aquatics Program for Persons with Disabilities has also been a growing experience for American Red Cross aquatics, requiring new and innovative ways to teach basic water safety skills. Lessons learned are shared in workshops for Red Cross leaders and water safety instructors, as well as non-Red Cross personnel words who work with persons with disabilities.

For more information, contact Jim Beeson, aquatics coordinator, Greater Toledo Area Chapter, at (419) 245-6200; e-mail lcesc_jb@nwoca.org.

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Tidewater Youth Volunteer at Special Olympics

"Let me win! But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." This is the oath of the Special Olympics. And it's why American Red Cross Youth love to help out deserving Special Olympians.

Eleven youth with the American Red Cross- Tidewater Chapter in Norfolk, Virginia, volunteered as cheering buddies at the Special Olympics Basketball Tournament at the Rockwell Hall Gym on Little Creek Naval Base. The youth volunteers, and volunteer adult mentors, had a great time, and helped to make a special day for these special athletes.

For more information contact Shirley B. Bisciglia, director, volunteer services, American Red Cross- Tidewater Chapter, at (757) 446-7756; e-mail bisciglias@tidewater-redcross.org.

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