



A Helping Holiday



ARTICLE DAVID T. HAMPTON | PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED



Linda Booker at left with member of Mexican Red Cross

VOLUNTEERING WITH THE AMERICAN RED CROSS



Tom Mainor with other Red Cross volunteers

WHEN TOM MAINOR ARRIVED IN PUERTO RICO IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE MARIA, HE SAW PEOPLE COLLECTING WATER TO DRINK FROM GUTTERS ALONG THE SIDE OF THE STREET.

Mainor, a volunteer with the American Red Cross of Southeast Tennessee, is based in Chattanooga. He would spend three weeks deployed to the island which was devastated by the September 2017 storm.

"We went to different towns each day and delivered food, water, tarps, flashlights, baby formula and diapers, but the main thing that was needed was water and food," Mainor says. "A lot of the roads had been cut off. A lot of them had not had any fresh water since the hurricane hit."

Mainor says the experience stands out as his most rewarding as a volunteer.

"We were able to go into some of these isolated towns with fresh food and water and supplies," he says. "They were so happy to see us and so kind, and just so grateful to see the Red Cross truck come up."

Mainor has been with the Red Cross for nearly a decade and has also deployed to Hawaii and along the Gulf and East Coasts. He also assisted with the response to the Gatlinburg wildfires.

While Chattanooga volunteers can deploy to disasters in other regions, the American Red Cross believes volunteering starts at home. Volunteers with the Southeast Tennessee chapter responded to 222 disasters in the local community in the last fiscal year, mostly home fires.

"Nationwide, over 95 percent of the Red Cross response and work is done by volunteers, with the support of a small number of paid staff," says Julia

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TRAVEL DESTINATION (CONTINUED)

Wright, executive director of the American Red Cross of Southeast Tennessee.

Last summer, volunteers from the local chapter deployed to Mississippi in July for Hurricane Barry and to Florida in August for Hurricane Dorian. Closer to home, they also served across the state of Tennessee for localized flooding in February and storm damage in Middle Tennessee in October.

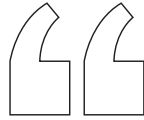
"We ask those who might be interested in becoming a volunteer to first consider going to your local chapter and becoming involved in the local community," Wright says. "We really want people to start at home. That way they have an opportunity to get familiar with some of the Red Cross processes and how things work and really just the concept of our operations."

Volunteers must train ahead of time before helping with a disaster response, whether at home or elsewhere.

Along with natural disaster response, the American Red Cross also leads home fire safety campaigns. "Sound the Alarm, Save a Life," an annual outreach campaign, begins April 18, 2020 and is part of a nationwide campaign to make communities safer by installing free smoke alarms in homes.

The Red Cross also relies on the generosity of donors, and "Sound the Alarm, Save a Life" is the kickoff fundraising event to support the chapter's year-round preparedness and response services to the community.

The chapter's largest fundraising event is the annual CHI Memorial Heroes Luncheon, which takes place each November to recognize local heroes while raising funds to support the American Red Cross mission. Watch the pages of *Chattanooga Lifestyle* magazine for details on how you can help this and other disaster relief missions in our region.



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how can you help?

- + Participate in "Sound the Alarm, Save a Life" in April by registering at SoundTheAlarm.org/Tennessee
- + Register to volunteer at RedCross.org/Volunteer
- + Sign up to donate blood at RedCrossBlood.org
- + Make a financial donation at RedCross.org/Donate