

Riverside County Red Cross Honors its Heroes

Contributed by Laura Beth Peterson
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Agua Caliente Resort Casino

Rancho Mirage, California

Story and photos by Laura Beth Peterson

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Selflessness and compassion are the words that came to mind as the American Red Cross honored its Riverside County volunteers at the Second Annual Heroes' Society Luncheon, Tue., March 24, at the Agua Caliente Resort Casino in Rancho Mirage. Sunrise Community Bank President and past Red Cross Board Member Stu Bailey opened the event by acknowledging volunteers and donors who provide relief to individuals who face dire circumstances.

On April 24, the Riverside County Red Cross will celebrate its 92nd year of providing services. American Red Cross Riverside County Chapter CEO Pam Anderson explained that most people think of the Red Cross during times of large disasters, as hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires. The fact is that there are many more "silent disasters" that happen every day and never make the news. Silent disasters include house fires, floods and other emergencies that create need for shelter, food, clothing, medicine and other critical emergency services. Long after firefighters leave the scene, the Red Cross ensures that people receive care, regardless of socioeconomic level, and with no expectation of repayment.

In December 2008 alone, the volunteers and staff responded to 31 disasters in 31 days. Volunteers were asked to come up to the stage to stand together and be recognized. Palm Springs Fire Chief Blake Goetz along with Cathedral City Fire Chief Bill Soqui were in attendance to express their support and gratitude for the volunteers and staff.

During the lunchtime presentation, the audience was introduced to Olivia Bernheimer. Bernheimer is a fifth grader at Marywood Palm Valley School. She was given a project in which she was required to write and present a project on an American hero. Bernheimer chose Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross. The Riverside County Red Cross provided her with some resources, including period clothing from the 1800s. She told the story of Barton in the first person, explaining that she started out tending to wounded soldiers during the American Civil War. Barton went on to work in some of the grimmest battlefields in American history. Olivia received an "A" on her project and educated the other fifth graders about the importance of helping those in distress.

In addition to emergency services, the American Red Cross educates people to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Some of the programs taught are community disaster preparedness, CPR training, first aid, lifeguard training and babysitting training.

For every dollar donated, 84 cents goes to the various programs. The American Red Cross depends on volunteers to do this important work. Volunteers constitute 97 percent of its workforce in areas such as board members, instructors teaching lifesaving skills, disaster action team members, office administrators, event organizers and more.

Many thanks to the wonderful volunteers and staff of the American Red Cross and the Agua Caliente Resort Casino for helping put on this event.

For more Laura Beth Peterson photos of the event, [click here](#).

For more information about the Riverside County Chapter of the American Red Cross, [click here](#).

For more information about the Agua Caliente Resort Casino, [click here](#).