

METRO ★

PRINCETON

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Red Cross helps military personnel, families during crises

By LAURIE PELLICHERO
Special to The Times

The American Red Cross of Central New Jersey is part of the Red Cross movement that began on the battlefield. Today, that spirit is present wherever U.S. military personnel are located.

The local chapter's Armed Services Emergency Services program enables service members and their families to communicate in times of emergency.

Red Cross employees and volunteers provide reporting and communication services through a network linking members of the military anywhere in the world with their loved ones at home.

Messages may convey the death or serious illness of a family member or other important events, such as the birth of a child. The information or ver-

ification in a message also assists the service member's commanding officer in making a decision regarding emergency leave.

Last year alone, the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey handled 437 Armed Forces Emergency Services cases.

Donna Nelson of Princeton found how effective the program can be when the health of her mother, Gertrude, deteriorated earlier this year. Donna's brother Dexter is serving overseas and she wanted to get him home to see their mother before she died.

Donna learned about the Armed Forces Emergency Services program through a friend whose husband is in the military. On Oct. 22, she placed a



message through the program requesting her brother be sent home to New Jersey because his mother was in the final stages of a terminal illness.

American Red Cross of New Jersey volunteer Emma Aseltta took the call, verified the information and processed the request quickly. Dexter arrived in New Jersey on a Monday and his mother died that Thursday. He was able to share his mother's last few days and attend her funeral before returning overseas.

"The Red Cross was there when we needed them and helped bring my mother quite a beautiful moment before she passed away," said Donna. "She didn't know that Dexter was able to

make it back. You should have seen the expression on her face when my brother walked into her hospital room!"

Funds from this year's Times' Holiday Appeal will be used to support the services and programs of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey.

The Times deducts no overhead expenses. All money goes directly to the designated nonprofit agency.

To make a donation in support of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, please make your check payable to The Holiday Appeal and mail or hand deliver it to: 500 Perry St., Box 847, Trenton, NJ 08605. You can also donate online at www.njredcross.com. All gifts will be acknowledged. Anonymity, if requested, will be granted.

For more information about the American Red Cross of Central New



Photo courtesy of the Red Cross

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Jersey, please call (609) 951-8550 or visit the Web site at www.njredcross.com.