

Red Cross provides relief at large and small disasters

By **LAURIE PELLICHERO**
 Special to The Times

A little more than a year ago, Azie Holmes was living with her husband and five children on the upper floor of a two-family home in Trenton.

On Sept. 28, 2004, their lives changed dramatically. About 4:30 in the afternoon a fire broke out in their home, destroying almost everything they owned. Everything they'd worked so hard for was gone. They were grateful to be alive, but they were homeless.

The American Red Cross of Central New Jersey's disaster relief services play a vital role in helping families recover from this type of tragic experience. Red Cross disaster relief volunteers provide a safe, secure place for families to stay, along with food, clothing and help in replacing medical supplies during times of critical need.

Curtis Hoberman, a Red Cross volunteer for 32 years, responded to the call for emergency assistance to the Holmes family that day, immediately

arranging for a place for them to stay and financial assistance for clothing and food. That gave the family time to determine what they should do next.

Azie said she was surprised by the assistance. She had no idea the American Red Cross provided disaster relief services. And she was impressed by their quick response.

"The Red Cross volunteer was right there at the fire and was understanding and compassionate," Azie said. "He was very efficient, in a kindly manner."

The repairs to their home took some time, but Azie and her family are happy to be back in their home this holiday season.

"It's good to know someone is there," said Azie. "I'd like to say thank you to Curtis and the American Red Cross for helping us in our time of need."

Disaster relief volunteers are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The American Red Cross



of Central New Jersey responded to 105 incidents needing disaster relief last year, not counting the local floods. Volunteers assisted 904 individuals, including 193 families.

All local Red Cross disaster assistance is free, made possible by generous donations of time and money from members of the local community.

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 Times Holiday Appeal and mail or hand deliver it to: 500 Perry St., Box 847, Trenton, NJ 08605. To make a donation online, visit www.redcross.org.

All gifts will be acknowledged. Anonymity, if requested, will be granted.



Photo courtesy of Red Cross

American Red Cross of Central New Jersey disaster relief services help those displaced by fires.

For more information about the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, please call (609) 951-8550 or visit the Web site at www.njredcross.org.