

Pre 1900

Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant, founded the Red Cross Movement after witnessing an 1859 battle outside the northern Italian town of Solferino. At nightfall, he saw 40,000 dead and wounded soldiers strewn about the battlefield without medical attention and began organizing care for the wounded. Dunant remembered the horror of Solferino and worked to establish a society for aid of those wounded in battle. In 1864, the first "Geneva Convention" established the International Committee of the Red Cross and specified that the "red cross" would be a protective emblem for medical personnel, equipment, and facilities. In 1901, Dunant received the first Nobel Peace Prize for his work.



Henri Dunant



Clara Barton

Clara Barton, the famous Civil War nurse, admired the Red Cross movement and established the American Red Cross in 1881. That same year, she sent relief supplies for those left homeless by the devastating forest fires in Michigan, and later led relief efforts during the great Ohio and Mississippi River flood of 1884. Heroic efforts after the Johnstown flood of 1889 firmly established the Red Cross in the hearts of the American people.

1900-1919

The American National Red Cross became the nation's official relief agency for civilians and military personnel with its first Congressional Charter of 1900. Later that year, seventy-eight year old Clara Barton led her last relief operation after 6000 died in the great Galveston hurricane.

On Easter weekend in 1913, more than 467 died as the worst flooding in Ohio history struck the Great Miami and Scioto River Valleys. In Columbus, the death toll reached 93 and thousands were left homeless after water reached 22 feet above flood stage. Disaster workers from the national Red Cross rushed to inundated cities to provide shelter, food, and clothing.

Local community leaders named George W. Lattimer the first Chairman after the Columbus Chapter of the American Red Cross was chartered on July 3, 1916. As America entered WWI, 60,000 local citizens joined the Red Cross to support troops abroad and their families at home by providing emergency communications and joining the "Production Corps" to make surgical dressings and articles of clothing for soldiers, veterans, and refugees.



Boats on Columbus streets during the floods in 1913.



More than 250 volunteers prepared a half-million surgical dressings during World War I.

1920-1939

Between the world wars, the Columbus Red Cross focused on emerging community needs. To reduce deaths and injuries from industrial accidents, Red Cross volunteers expanded first aid training. Because drowning was a public health crisis, training for lifeguards and swimming lessons for children became a top priority. Today, 11% of Columbus area residents learn Red Cross lifesaving techniques each year.

President Warren Harding helped welcome delegates to the first Red Cross National Convention at the "Ohio State Exposition Grounds" in Columbus in October 1921.

As the nation mobilized to confront the Great Depression, local volunteers distributed a million pounds of food and 80,000 garments for struggling families and Red Cross nurses helped provide medical care.

In 1937, weeks of unrelenting rain flooded 12,000 sq. miles in the Ohio River Valley. Though spared the devastation of southern Ohio, the Red Cross housed and fed 1,300 made homeless in Columbus.



During the Depression, the chapter recruited volunteer nurses and doctors to provide physical examinations to more than 6,000 children.

1940-1949

As World War II began, local focus was once again expanded to include support for military families. 125,000 volunteers joined the Red Cross to produce surgical dressings and hospital supplies and to provide emergency communications for those waiting at home. Five hundred local nurses were recruited for service overseas and, in 1942, volunteer donors began rolling up their sleeves to donate blood for wounded soldiers.

Joining the national organization in the largest peacetime health project ever, Red Cross resumed blood collection in Columbus on Dec. 7, 1948. After a successful inaugural blood drive at Nationwide, volunteer donors gave 25,000 units of blood to help local patients that year. Today, the Red Cross accepts nearly 139,000 units of blood each year for the patients in central Ohio.



Red Cross volunteers comforted wounded soldiers Lockbourne Air Force Base, Fort Hayes, and Chillicothe Veteran's Hospital during World War II.



Motor Service volunteer delivers desperately needed blood in 1944.

1950-1969

After a regrettably short interlude, the soldiers fighting in the Korean War needed a steady, reliable blood supply. The Columbus Red Cross added staff and expanded facilities to support nightly shipments to military bases. In 1952 alone, local residents donated 23,000 units of blood to save the lives of men and women in combat.

In 1951, the Columbus Red Cross joined the United Appeals, now the United Way of Central Ohio, to form a partnership that remains strong today.

As the worst polio epidemic in U.S. history peaks with 58,000 cases and more than 3,000 deaths, local Red Cross nurses and other volunteers help fight the epidemic. They helped distribute the Salk vaccine in 1955 and the oral vaccine, which virtually eradicated the disease, in 1962.

As the popularity of leisure boating increased in the late fifties, the Red Cross teamed with The Ohio State University to introduce small watercraft safety training. In 1959, research proved mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was an effective life saving technique and the Red Cross began adding it to first aid classes.

The needs of the families of service members fighting in Vietnam became a priority for the local Red Cross. To ease the pain of separation, the Red Cross sent taped messages and photos and stepped up efforts to get blood to the wounded. Needing more space to meet the demand, the Columbus chapter moved into a large facility at 995 E. Broad Street, where it remains today.



Red Cross volunteers return to their sewing machines to support soldiers and families during the Korean War.



When flooding again hit Columbus in 1959, 2,000 families turned to the Red Cross for food, clothing and shelter.

1970-1979

As the Vietnam War waged on, families waiting hopefully at home continued to top the agenda of the Columbus Red Cross. When the war ended, staff and volunteers pitched in to help resettle more than 800 Vietnamese refugees.

In 1974, a major breakthrough in saving the lives of heart attack victims, Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation, "CPR", was added to Red Cross Health and Safety education. Also in 1974, the Red Cross launched a Transportation Program to enable senior citizens to keep their medical appointments and help them continue to live in their own homes. Today, the program is going strong and growing ... driving 1,200 people to more than 5,000 appointments every year.

On January 26, 1978, the worst snowstorm in Ohio history left hundreds of thousands of Ohions without food, fuel, or electricity and killed 51. Red Cross chapters across the state joined the Ohio National Guard in the relief effort.



Columbus Red Cross volunteers rushed help to Xenia following the deadly tornado in 1974.



In 1978, Columbus Red Cross volunteers sheltered 2,300 people left stranded by the Blizzard of '78.

1980-1989

Red Cross First Aid Service Corps coordinated the "world's longest" first aid station for the Columbus to Portsmouth bicycle tour in 1980. The FASC continues to provide first aid at OSU sports activities and other community events.

The Greater Columbus community donated \$85,000 through the Red Cross to help feed the millions starving in Africa. The residents of Central Ohio have continued to give generously for domestic disasters like Hurricane Andrew and the Midwest Floods and for international emergencies like Hurricane Mitch and the devastating earthquake that struck Gujarat India in January 2001.

The American Red Cross of Greater Columbus joined the national battle to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic by introducing education and prevention classes in 1986. The effort continues today as a new generation confronts the risk of infection. Red Cross also established Tissue Services for banking and distribution of human tissue used in a growing range of medical procedures. One tissue donor can save or enhance the lives of 200 people.



The Red Cross First Aid Service Corps supported the first Columbus Marathon in 1980.

1990-2001

Following Hurricane Andrew in 1992, disaster workers from Columbus were dispatched to help in the massive relief operation. Central Ohio residents and companies donated nearly \$794,000 to the Disaster Relief fund that year. This level of caring has been demonstrated repeatedly in times of major disasters.

While the Cold War had ended, 1990's Operation Desert Storm reminded area residents to stand behind local military families. 6,300 turned to the Red Cross for help with emergency messages during the Persian Gulf War and the chapter helped organize needed family support groups.

With leadership from President Elizabeth Dole, the Red Cross undertook a massive transformation of Biomedical Services to ensure the safety of the nation's its blood supply and revitalized disaster relief programs in keeping with a changing environment.

Early in the decade, the chapter expanded efforts to help families of war victims find those who were lost. Through the Red Cross Holocaust Tracing Center, more than 900 reunions were celebrated in the nineties.

Experts believe thousands of lives could be saved each year with Automated External Defibrillators, (AEDs), a small device that can be operated by non-medical personnel. The Red Cross added AED training to its course offerings in 1998 and began promoting placement in work sites and other public places and training in their use.

In 2000, Columbus again hosted the American Red Cross National Convention. Governor and Mrs. Taft invited 2800 delegates and guests and newly named President Bernadine Healy to "Discover Columbus".



More than 2,000 elementary school students learned safety messages through Safety City in 1990. During 2001, the program reached 45 percent of Franklin County youth.