

**NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF THE BUDGET
TOWN HALL HEARINGS
NOVEMBER 17, 2007**

**AMERICAN RED CROSS
GREATER ROCHESTER CHAPTER
MONICA GUARDINO
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**

My name is Monica Guardino, and I am the Chief Operating Officer for the American Red Cross Greater Rochester Chapter. Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today.

The Greater Rochester Chapter is one of 36 chapters in NYS that help New Yorkers prepare for disasters and provides assistance when disasters strike. The American Red Cross in New York State is requesting \$20 million in the 2008-09 State budget for the programs and services we provide for all New Yorkers.

Rather than bombard you with a lot of statistics about the work the Red Cross does in this community and around New York State, I would like to share with you 2 real life stories.

Last Spring – a young woman – Alysia - with the Rochester City School District’s “Young Mothers’ Program” was encouraged by her teacher to take a Red Cross First Aid and Infant CPR Course offered through the school district. After some convincing - Alysia completed the training. Within two days of finishing the class, while she was getting ready for school, her 10 week old baby son (Jayleen) stopped breathing. Because of her Red Cross training – she knew what to do. Her first attempt to resuscitate Jayleen didn’t get work. But her second attempt did and he began to breathe. I recently saw pictures of Jayleen and he is beautiful flourishing child. Alysia’ Red Cross preparedness training made a big difference in the positive outcome of this story.

Last year, in NYS, the Red Cross trained over 620,000 people in life saving skills and 190,000 people in basic preparedness training. The funding from NYS played a big part in making this happen.

Last year, in NYS, the Red Cross responded to more than 5,000 disasters, many of them residential fires. In this six

county region, the local Red Cross chapters supported over 440 families with disaster services.

To me, it really hit home, when I met someone who had lost his entire home. I didn't meet him at the Red Cross. I met him at my home. I had hired a contractor, who worked primarily on his own, to do some work at my house. One morning, Jay asked me where I worked. When I told him that I worked at the Red Cross, his face lit up. He proceeded to share his story with me. He was at work one day and got a call on his cell phone from a neighbor, who told him his house was on fire. He arrived at his house, to find it engulfed in flames, being tended to by the firefighters. He explained to me how lost he felt watching his belongings and his home disappear in front of him. He shared with me that if the Red Cross was not there to help, he wouldn't have known what to do or where to start. The Red Cross provided him a place to stay, clothing, food, and the basic necessities to get through the days to come. He was so appreciative of this support and the fact that someone was there to help him think through all that needed to be done – to help him focus on getting back on his feet – to help him know that he was not alone.

Through the support of NYS, the Red Cross has helped victims of disaster get back on their feet and find comfort in their hour of need.

The American Red Cross is confident that funding for our proposal will significantly increase our ability to protect the health and welfare of the citizens of New York State, like Alysia, Jayleen, and Jay.

The American Red Cross and the State of New York have developed a strong partnership over the years, and this partnership has resulted in a safer New York. We look forward to continuing this partnership and working effectively to prepare, prevent and respond to future disasters in New York.

On behalf of the Red Cross and the people we serve across NYS, I want to thank you in advance for your consideration.

Thank you.