

# Couple Volunteer at a Moment's Notice

## American Red Cross Disaster Response Team Serves Around the Country

By Judie Holcomb-Pack

Responding to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Harvey and Juanita Pardue were with a group of volunteers from Kingswood United Methodist Church helping to clean up the damaged home of a 93-year-old man. At lunch time Harvey helped spread out sandwiches they had made earlier on the tailgate of a pick-up truck. Suddenly a Red Cross vehicle pulled up and someone shouted, "You all want a hot meal?" Harvey couldn't believe his eyes. They were so far out in the country at Moss Point, Miss., that he didn't know how the Red Cross could have known where they were.

"Right then I decided that I would check out volunteering for the Red Cross when we got home," Harvey related. He and Juanita joined the disaster response team of the American Red Cross and have responded to everything from finding lost children to house fires, hostage situations and national disasters. The Red Cross provides food for emergency workers and law enforcement officers in various situations when they can't leave their post to take a break or eat a meal. They also feed volunteers and victims of national disasters, such as hurricanes, floods and tornados.

Harvey and Juanita attended training classes, including first aid and drivers training so they could drive the large vehicles that respond to crises. They both became Certified Mass Care Responders and were on call to respond to national emergencies. They had to be able to respond to an emergency within 24 hours and be away from home for two to three weeks at a time.

Having volunteered in several countries for their church's mission teams, Harvey and Juanita were used to staying in less than comfortable accommodations. This was good experience for them when they began to respond to national disasters. Disaster teams from groups such as the Red Cross and the Baptist Men, along with FEMA, set up self-contained villages at disaster sites. There are huge tents that contain as many as 500 cots, and trailers that provide showers and laundry



facilities. The Baptist Men provide meals for the volunteers and the victims. It's a coordinated effort to respond to the disaster.

Harvey remarked, "We were often moved every two or three days. Sometimes we were on cots in a school, sometimes in the tent."

"We learned to pack light and to try to get a cot on the outside of the tent. These were closest to the port-a-jons," Juanita said. "You came in and put your bag down wherever you could find an empty cot. And it could be a challenge finding your cot among all the others at the end of the day."

When in Galveston, Texas, Harvey and Juanita helped to serve two meals a day to 200 to 250 people. Harvey knew how many meals they could serve and would walk down the line, counting people and at a point telling people beyond that point that they may not have a meal for them. Juanita remembers one day when the line was long. Toward the end of the line, a woman with two small children came to the window where Juanita was serving the last of the meals and asked for two meals. When Juanita saw that the woman had a young girl and boy with her, she asked the woman about the boy and the woman replied that she would share her

## March is National American Red Cross Month

Clara Barton and friends founded the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C. on May 21, 1881. She led the Red Cross for 23 years, organizing domestic and overseas disaster relief efforts, and aided the United States military during the Spanish-American War.

Today, the supporters, volunteers and employees of the American Red Cross provide compassionate care in five critical areas:

- People affected by disasters in America
- Support for members of the military and their families
- Blood collection, processing and distribution
- Health and safety education and training
- International relief and development

For more information about the American Red Cross, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

meal with him. Juanita said to her, "No, he will have a meal, too." She made sure the woman had three meals.

Harvey is now 87 years old and Juanita is 85 and they are both slowing down some with their volunteering. When asked why they have volunteered for so long, Juanita replied, "We have been so fortunate during our 67 years of marriage and we knew we needed to give back."

"You have to pay your own way on mission trips and people sometimes

tell me they don't have enough money or time to give," Harvey commented. "But you always have something to give. We haven't missed a thing. You give of yourself when you share with others."

When thinking about his years of serving others, Harvey thinks about food. "We eat by the clock - 7 o'clock is breakfast, 12 o'clock is lunch, 6 o'clock is dinner. But the majority of people on earth eat when they have food."

Harvey said, "If you can leave at a moment's notice, the Red Cross is a wonderful place to volunteer. It's a good way to love your neighbor."