

Worst-case scenarios bring out best of Bellefonte woman

Editor's note: Each Monday, "Helping Neighbors" will feature an exceptional volunteer in Centre County. To nominate someone for a future story, e-mail cdtnewstips@centredaily.com.

By Gall Franklin
For the CDT

The images of destruction the world witnessed after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in August 2005 were what made Nancy Noll take action.

"When Katrina happened I was glued to the TV. It ripped my heart out," she recently said in the kitchen of her bed and breakfast in Bellefonte. "I wanted to do something, I wanted to help and the response was,

"Have you ever trained?"

Noll had asked a friend at the Centre Communities Chapter of the American Red Cross about the possibility of being a disaster volunteer but had not been trained. Noll then decided

to "put herself in a preparedness mode" for the next time.

That meant taking courses with the Red Cross as soon as she could get signed up as a volunteer. Noll learned first aid, CPR and got basic training before she took specialty classes on how to set up a mass shelter, do case work for clients during an emergency and give referrals for services not provided by the Red Cross.

Disaster volunteers have the choice to deploy to local emergencies, such as a house fire or small flood; to national emergencies like an earthquake or hurricane; or to both.

Noll, who owns and operates The Queen, a Victorian bed and breakfast, said her schedule allows her to be on call for some national disasters because she can plan ahead.

Volunteers must agree to serve for up to three weeks at a national event, and once they get the call they travel within 24 hours after they've been assigned.

Noll has responded to national disasters twice since she joined the Red Cross. In the fall



CDT photo/Christopher Weddle

Nancy Noll, of Bellefonte, a disaster volunteer with the American Red Cross, is on standby in case her assistance is needed in Washington during the presidential inauguration.

of 2007 she was sent to California to do client case work for people affected by the wildfires that destroyed homes in the San Diego area.

In June, she spent her 63rd birthday looking for Indiana residents in a flood who had called a national helpline to ask for basic needs.

Separately from the Red

Cross, Noll went to Mississippi last March to help fix up homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina with a group she learned about in the newspaper.

She said her volunteer work has interfered with her business, at times, but she hopes to scale back her responsibilities at the inn one day so she can volunteer to be on call for more

FOR MORE INFO

To learn more about the local chapter of the American Red Cross and how to become a volunteer, visit <http://centre.redcross.org>.

national events.

"It's given me a new purpose," Noll said. "It feels so good."

She is one of eight volunteers from the local Red Cross chapter who went on standby Friday in case their help is needed during the presidential inauguration in Washington this week. Millions of visitors are expected to the city.

"Because of the nature of the event, when you get that many people in one place you just have to plan ahead," said Romayne Naylor, emergency services director of the Centre Communities Chapter. "It's not that anyone thinks anything extraordinary is going to happen. It's that we must be prepared for the sorts of things that happen any time that many people are in one place."

"This is business as usual for the Red Cross," Naylor added.

