



Red Cross volunteer Stephen Anderson feigns chest pains as Jamestown nurses and Red Cross volunteers Mary Berthelot, Sue Packet, Diane Forrest and Mary Kelly offer assistance at the mock disaster drill at the Melrose school emergency shelter. Photo by Sam Bari

Simulated disaster tested town for readiness

By Sam Bari

A simulated disaster at the Melrose Avenue School emergency shelter last Saturday, May 5, tested the town as well as the newly-trained personnel for readiness in case of a real emergency. The event was part of a nationwide drill that tested emergency shelters throughout the country.

The Northeast area, which included all of the New England states, dealt with a simulated hurricane, a situation that could easily happen during this year's upcoming hurricane season.

On Friday, May 4, signs were posted around town directing people to the shelter. The public was informed and warned of a severe category three hurricane that would make landfall sometime during the night. A Red Cross-trained emergency disaster team gathered at the Melrose school and converted it into a shelter, just as if a real hurricane were arriving. The doors opened at 8 a.m. and volunteers trickled in to wait out the storm. The shelter was prepared to handle approximately 75 people who would be seeking emergency assistance.

The exercise was planned to test the full range of domestic incidence management procedures, which included media relations and public information in response to the National Response Plan. Since the exercise was part of a national drill, the Red Cross involved many groups that would take part in a mass emergency, should one occur. The National Weather Service, Department of Defense (DOD), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) all worked together to make the drill as realistic as possible.

American Red Cross disaster relief trucks were brought down from

Providence to participate in the exercise. They were stationed at the shelter entrance with the District 3 teams that ran them at the ready to hand out emergency comfort kits and offer assistance to those in need.

American Red Cross Director of Emergency Services Nick Logothets, a 20-year veteran of the Red Cross, parked his disaster assistance vehicle at the shelter entrance and helped shelter personnel handle their first drill. Logothets taught the five classes that trained the Jamestown emergency shelter team.

The team, led by shelter manager Joan Fink, registered everyone seeking assistance. Those having special physical or mental needs were referred to the health clinic that was staffed with nurses. Cots with blankets were set up in the dormitory and special care was taken to keep families together. Toys were provided for children and the disabled and elderly were given special assistance. All sleeping areas were monitored with security.

Richard Ventrone set up and operated his Ham radio, while his wife Nancy Ventrone handled public information. Barbara Szepatowski set up a kennel outside of the school to handle pets. Mary Kelly and Mary Berthelot, both nurses, were in charge of medical assistance, while Joan McCauley handled communications.

Town Emergency Management Director and Police Chief Thomas Tighe was on hand with police department personnel, as well as the fire department and emergency medical service team. Other Red Cross volunteers that helped with the operation and have not yet been mentioned were Ron Fink, John McCauley, Anne Tighe, Lewis Kitts, Cathy Devellis, Sam, Fred, and Sarah Pease, and David and Michael

Robinson.

Local Merchants provided meals and snacks, and the Narragansett Dunkin Donuts provided coffee and donuts. Public health officials inspected all kitchens, food storage, food preparations, restrooms and health care areas.

Chief Tighe said the exercise was a success and that all emergency personnel performed admirably.



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NK parent group to meet

The North Kingstown High School PTO will meet on Tuesday, May 22, at 7 p.m. in the media center.

Detective Jason Clark will present, "Parental Responsibilities and Teen Alcohol Abuse—Unraveling the Confusion." Principal Gerald Foley will also give his monthly report on school news, events and activities. PTO officers for next year will also be discussed. Parents are urged to attend this very important meeting regarding our children.



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