

# DEEDS

*good people  
doing  
good things*



# KIA ORA,

**Welcome to the first edition of RED for 2021. This is my first editorial as New Zealand Red Cross' Secretary General. I joined the organisation in December 2020 and have spent the last six months connecting with our Red Cross people across the country and hearing many inspiring stories of our work, including some shared in this magazine.**

This edition of RED is a great reflection of the breadth of work New Zealand Red Cross carries out each and every day in communities across Aotearoa and as far away as Armenia.

One of the highlights for me, so far, was the Red Cross Appeal in March. An incredible effort was undertaken by Red Cross people across the country to raise vital funds for our organisation. Make sure to stop by page 3 for a few snaps and smiles from our street collectors all over Aotearoa.

On 22 February, we marked the 10-year anniversary of the 2011 Canterbury Earthquake. The 22 February earthquake was a significant event and for New Zealand Red Cross, our organisation's response was enormous – as was our impact. As one of our disaster response volunteers who was deployed to Christchurch at the time, do read Trudy Taylor's story on page 5.

In March, we observed another anniversary – 10 years of conflict in Syria. In Aotearoa, Red Cross has supported the settlement of thousands of Syrian refugees in to their new communities. On page 7, you can read about four inspiring women who escaped the bombs and bullets and found a peaceful life in Dunedin.

This issue is crammed full of inspiring and interesting stories about what our amazing Red Cross people have been up to across the country and for one international delegate – reflections on her time in Armenia.

I hope you enjoy this edition of RED and that, just like me, you are inspired by the far-reaching work Red Cross does across Aotearoa and around the world.

Ngā mihi,

**Sarah Stuart-Black**  
SECRETARY GENERAL



Sarah Stuart-Black  
(often known by her  
nickname 'Norm'),  
Secretary General



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## Who are we?

New Zealand Red Cross is part of the largest humanitarian network in the world – the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. We've been helping in New Zealand since 1915.

We're helping Kiwis every day - whether that's providing a hot meal, helping former refugees rebuild their lives or engaging with local communities to be better prepared for an emergency. And, right across the world, we help people affected by disaster and conflict. Our mission? To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity and enhancing community resilience.

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## Our Fundamental Principles

- Humanity
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Voluntary Service
- Unity
- Universality

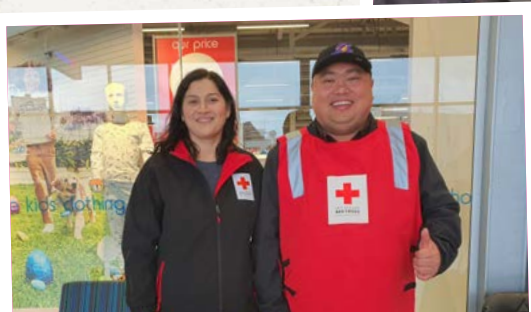
Read more about them at [redcross.org.nz/about-us/what-we-stand-for](http://redcross.org.nz/about-us/what-we-stand-for).



Kids at Crank Up Day in Invercargill.

Red Cross Appeal Southland

Disaster response volunteer, Decibelle Tan, laying the New Zealand Red Cross wreath at the National Memorial for the Canterbury Earthquakes.



Students from Scot's College in Wellington.



People supporting our appeal in Kerikeri.

2021  
RED CROSS  
APPEAL:  
  
Helping  
us stay  
GOOD  
& ready



Street collectors in Whangarei.



Our Napier Branch.



New Zealand Red Cross Secretary General, Sarah Stuart-Black, and National President, Kerry Nickels, collecting in Auckland.

street collectors holding buckets and sharing stories about the great work New Zealand Red Cross is doing in our communities.

More than 1,500 people volunteered their time in 25 towns and cities across Aotearoa to stand on footpaths and storefronts with donation buckets and tap-and-go devices

in hand. From 15-21 March, an accumulated 4,000 hours were spent volunteering for the Red Cross Appeal. This is a remarkable effort, and we would like to extend our utmost thanks to all our street collectors for their incredible support in raising vital funds to help people in need.

New Zealand Red Cross is committed to making fundraising opportunities as accessible as possible for donors and volunteers alike so, this year, we also invited supporters to join the Red Cross Appeal by signing up to a virtual bucket collection. This was a quick and easy way for people to support the appeal and share it with their friends, whānau, colleagues and neighbours.

### Why is the Red Cross Appeal so important?

We know emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time. Our communities are often hit hard by the consequences – individuals are impacted, homes, schools and workplaces are damaged, access and transportation is disrupted, communities and networks are displaced.

An important part of our disaster preparedness at New Zealand Red Cross is making sure we have the financial resources we need to respond quickly. While Kiwis often donate very generously following an emergency, we need to make sure we have funds available before that so we can immediately help when people need us most.

### That's why the Red Cross Appeal is so important

Our supporters are an essential part of helping those people thrust into vulnerable situations. The Red Cross Appeal is a great opportunity to get involved. Only with the help of our Red Cross supporters can we make a real difference to people in their hour of need.

### Thank you!

This year's Red Cross Appeal would not have been possible without the support of all our Red Cross people - our members, volunteers, staff and corporate supporters.

Thank you to everyone who made the 2021 Red Cross Appeal so successful. In Aotearoa and around the world, Red Cross will continue to support people in need, wherever they may be and whatever they may face.

From 15-21 March, hundreds of good people across Aotearoa were seen doing good things in support of our annual Red Cross Appeal.

The Red Cross Appeal is New Zealand Red Cross' annual fundraising campaign that helps the organisation support people in need and be prepared to respond when disaster strikes.

Our street appeal was cancelled last year due to COVID-19, but our work helping people in Aotearoa and overseas has continued. From helping former refugees settle into their new homes, to delivering meals to vulnerable people, from providing first aid training in the community, to helping stranded foreign nationals through COVID-19, we are here – whenever and wherever our help is needed.

### Out and about

This March, our wonderful Red Cross people took to the streets all over the country to support the Red Cross Appeal. From Kerikeri to Invercargill, we had

Join our next fundraising event in June – our new look Red Cross Journey! Sign up at [redcrossjourney.org.nz](https://redcrossjourney.org.nz)

# REFLECTING ON THE CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKE 10 YEARS ON



**On 22 February 2011, disaster response volunteer Trudy Taylor was in her home in Whanganui when she felt the ground shaking. She huddled around the radio with her husband as they listened anxiously to the announcement that a 6.3 magnitude earthquake had hit the Canterbury region.**

One week later, she was on a flight to Christchurch with fellow members of her Disaster Welfare and Support Team. They were heading down to assist with New Zealand Red Cross' response efforts.

"I joined the second wave of responders. By the time I had arrived, there was infrastructure already in place," explains Trudy.

Trudy was based in the Emergency Operations Centre, along with other organisations who were responding to the disaster. The space was shared with volunteers who were taking calls from affected members of the public. Trudy would receive lists of individuals who needed assistance and would send assist teams to help.

Sending teams to locations where people needed assistance was challenging in the ever-changing landscape of the city.

"You could drive somewhere and, 10 minutes later, you weren't allowed to drive down that road anymore. Suddenly there was a big sinkhole. I tried to organise it so that teams could stay in the same area, to reduce the travel time needed."

Red Cross' disaster response teams went into

neighbourhoods to conduct welfare checks and listen to what people needed.

One of the stories that stuck with Trudy was when she received a call from a volunteer on the ground who told her about a woman they had assisted earlier that day.

"They [disaster response volunteers] had taken her to the showers and the showers were cold. But she was so grateful because she hadn't showered in a week and just stood there and cried and repeated 'thank you so much'. It's those stories that hit home and make you realise why we are there and why we are doing it."

## **The emotional toll**

Busy days turned into weeks, and the disaster response teams didn't get many



Trudy Taylor alongside her husband Lindsey Taylor and fellow disaster response volunteer Shaun Jarman.

opportunities to reflect on the magnitude of the situation. They were focused on the task at hand, with aftershocks reminding them of the reality they were in.

**“You could hear everyone holding their breath when those big aftershocks came through, and there were people who you could tell were locals because they were the ones who would dive under the tables and just sit there trembling,”** says Trudy.

When assigning assistance groups, Trudy would try to pair a local disaster response team member with a team member from another city. This was done to utilise local knowledge of the roads and to make sure the volunteers had someone to speak to if they needed to vent.

“There was certainly a lot of stress. You could see that people were going through hard times,” says Trudy.

“One of the hardest things when you’re on a local disaster response team, and it’s your community affected, is not doing anything. That’s what you’ve trained for – you want to help your community. Going about your daily routine or going to work is hard because where you want to be is out there helping,” she says.

### **From Whanganui to Christchurch with love**

After an exhausting four days in Christchurch, Trudy was sitting at the airport when she, for the first time, started to realise the significance of Red Cross being in Christchurch.

“I was still in my uniform, thinking about how I hadn’t had a chance to shower for four days. I had numerous people come up to me and shake my hand and say thank you. One lady hugged me and said: ‘Red Cross has done such wonderful things for me in the last three days. I can’t thank you enough.’ It was so heart-warming,” recalls Trudy.

Trudy returned to Whanganui and went straight back to work, but her thoughts remained with the people of Christchurch.

“When I came back home, for those first few days, it was hard to think normally again, because all you’re thinking about is, ‘what else can I do for

those people?’ We’re so lucky we haven’t gone through that.”

The experience of being a part of Red Cross’ response in Canterbury 10 years ago is one that will stay with Trudy forever.

“It was that anchor point for me – why I volunteer. That’s what Red Cross is all about. The humanitarian part is just amazing. That cemented for me that I should keep going and continue with what I’m doing. It was meaningful and it stood for all our principles, and that’s why we’re there,” she says.

### **Ready when needed**

From providing first aid to supporting with evacuation, our volunteers are multiskilled and available to support people affected by a disaster at a moment’s notice.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognise our amazing partners, New Zealand Post, as we celebrate 10 years of partnership.

Over the past decade, thanks to the enduring support from New Zealand Post, we have continued to deliver positive impact where it’s needed most.

**DONATE**



to enable our disaster response volunteers to train and offer support to people after a disaster.  
[redcross.org.nz/donate](https://redcross.org.nz/donate).

# FROM SYRIA TO AOTEAROA: THE TALES OF FOUR WOMEN WHO *survived* THE BOMBS

Imagine one day, the walls of your home start shaking, the sounds of our tūi are replaced by those of loud explosions, fresh air changes to the smell of burning and death, and blue skies are hidden behind grey smoke. Imagine Aotearoa is no longer safe. Bullets and bombs have become the new normal.

## What would you do?

In the last decade, the world has witnessed the highest levels of displacement on record – 80 million forcibly displaced people. More people are fleeing their homes than ever before, even surpassing post-World War II numbers. Behind this staggering figure are ordinary people who have faced extraordinary circumstances. Children, mothers, grandparents –

people just like us who had no option other than to flee.

Since March 2011, fighting between state and non-state armed groups in Syria has caused large-scale death and destruction and has triggered more than five million people to flee the bombs and bullets and escape across borders. Millions more have been displaced inside Syria and are still in dire need of assistance. As the war continues, hope is fading.

Ten years after the start of the Syrian conflict, people in Syria are faced with a multitude of crises: continuous hostilities, a complete economic breakdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. Infrastructure across the country is ruined. People are unable to cover their most basic needs because of serious shortages of food, water, fuel and medicines, among other supplies. They are more dependent on aid today than they were five or 10 years ago. Millions of Syrians, who were once self-sufficient, rely on humanitarian assistance and face serious food shortages. The top three priorities expressed by Syrians are access to food and nutrition, livelihood support and shelter support over winter.

Since the beginning of the conflict, our colleagues at the Syrian Arab Red Crescent have been on the frontline of the humanitarian response to this crisis. With support from across the International Red Cross and Red Crescent

Photo: Syrian Arab Red Crescent





Movement, Red Crescent volunteers bring aid, medical assistance and care to millions of people, without regard for political affiliation, ethnicity or creed. Risking their own lives, Red Crescent volunteers are delivering 60 per cent of all aid in Syria.

## From Syria to Aotearoa

In November 2014, as an increasing number of people were forced to flee Syria, New Zealand started offering sanctuary to Syrian refugees. A special emergency quota was set up for people who had fled the Syrian conflict, in addition to

New Zealand's annual Refugee Quota Programme of 750.

In the last seven years, Aotearoa has welcomed thousands of Syrian refugees. It is undeniable that Syrians have made New Zealand a better place – a country that is a little more diverse, skilled, colourful and beautiful than before. Over the years, these new Kiwis have shared their culture, skills, food and work ethic with the rest of Aotearoa.

Thousands of kilometres away from the Syrian conflict, in peaceful Aotearoa, we met

with four incredible women who fled the horror of the conflict and were offered a new and peaceful life in Dunedin. They are four different women whose strengths and outlooks on life we can all learn from, and who feel very lucky they are able to be called Kiwis.

Meet Manahel Haroura, Nisrine Zarzar, Rahaf Almabaid and Alia Al Mohamad, four inspiring former refugee wāhine, each with a unique story of survival, courage and determination.

# MANAHEL HAROURA

**Manahel has the uncanny ability to light up every room she enters. Always. Despite everything she's been through, her positive outlook on life is contagious.**

Manahel is a single mother who fled the war in Syria with her three children across the border to Lebanon. Like many others, she doesn't like to recall her experiences and wants to focus on the future – one that she hopes will bring peace and happiness to her family. In 2017, the family was offered resettlement in Dunedin – a new life Manahel has grabbed with both hands.

"It's nice, safe, quiet and with many friendly people. And Dunedin is such a nice city. I'm happy here," says Manahel.

Manahel's tenacity and ambition led her to approach New Zealand Red Cross to help her find employment. Red Cross' Pathways to Employment team in Dunedin introduced Manahel to Earth Sea Sky in Christchurch, which owns Elco Apparel in Dunedin.

The buzz of sewing machines in the Elco Apparel workroom was new to Manahel, but she's become very familiar with the sound since she started training as a machinist. It's a sound she's learned to appreciate – one that reminds her how safe she is in New Zealand, away from the noise of bombs in Syria.

Despite having to learn how to use these machines – alongside a whole new vocabulary

specific to sewing – Manahel has picked up the ins and outs of being a machinist very quickly.

**“With this job, I feel like I am doing something good in life. And my children are so happy. They came to the workshop and had a very nice time here. They know all the team and the team knows them. Today, my son cried because he wanted to come to the workshop with me,”** Manahel laughs.





## Nisrine Zarzar

Behind Nisrine Zarzar's beautifully colour-coordinated pink hijab and top, complemented by matching makeup, is a woman with incredible strength and resilience.

Nisrine was six months pregnant with her son, Mohammad, when her cooking was interrupted

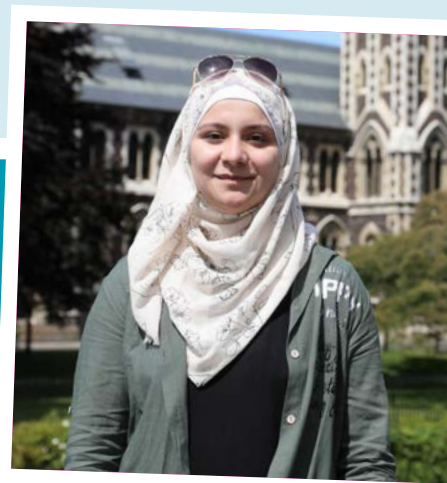
by the sound of a violent explosion. It was a bomb, which ripped Nisrine's world apart. The blast injured her other son, Kasem, who lost his leg and injured his arm. On that day, Nisrine also lost her husband, two daughters and a son.

Nisrine didn't choose to flee Syria – she had no other option if she wanted to keep Kasem and her unborn child safe. Once Kasem recovered from the injuries caused by the bomb, they crossed the border to Lebanon where she applied through the United Nations for protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Because of Kasem's disability, the offer for resettlement in New Zealand came relatively quickly – two years later. Since 2017,

the Zarzar family has been living peacefully in Dunedin, a city they love and now call home.

Nisrine is a tenacious woman whose grace, courage and outlook on life is an inspiration to many. She has found a way to rebuild her life, despite the horror she has experienced, and her resilience is something many of us can learn from. For all the other women struggling to make Aotearoa their new home, whatever their circumstance, Nisrine has one message:

**“Don't give up. The future will cover everything for you. You must work very hard to achieve what you want.”**



## RAHAF ALMABAID

Rahaf Almabaid is a talented writer and student, who will tackle any challenge that comes her way in order to reach her dreams.

From a very young age, she dreamt of going to university. When the war in Syria broke out and her family was forced to flee to Lebanon, Rahaf did not stop pursuing her goals. Even before she and her family were offered resettlement in Aotearoa, Rahaf had her eyes set on the University of Otago.

“Once I heard about the possibility of moving to New Zealand, I did my

research. The first thing I found was University of Otago – which is so weird! I got excited and thought, ‘Maybe it will be my university one day?’” explains Rahaf.

Little did she know that the University of Otago was indeed going to be the place where she would pursue her dream to become a doctor. Last year, she completed her first year of Health Science and, this year, she's enrolled to start Biomedical Science, majoring in functional human biology.

**“I dream to be a doctor and help the community**

**– [I want to] do it for my parents, who sacrificed everything for me and my brother. They wanted us to have these opportunities and they get so excited whenever we do something new, so I'm going for it.”**

Nothing will stop Rahaf from achieving her dreams – her story is far from over.



# ALIA AL MOHAMAD

**Alia Al Mohamad's story of perseverance and passion for humanity is one that will inspire anyone lucky enough to cross her path.**

It took years for Alia to build her successful career in Syria, but the war took it all away. Thankfully, her passion and fortitude were left intact.

Alia had everything she could dream of in Syria – a beautiful and loving family, her own house, a business and an impressive career. She was a superwoman, able to do it all.

Alia worked as a qualified midwife in Syria for 11 years, both in a public hospital and at her private clinic, while raising four children. Life was busy, but it brought her a lot of happiness.

Then the war began, and her hospital was bombed. Alia knew it was time to leave, so she fled the country with her family and crossed the Lebanese border, where they lived for four years before they were offered resettlement in New Zealand.

With the help of her new friends, Alia was able to build a life in Dunedin and look forward to her Kiwi future – a mindset that requires a lot of courage and strength, when everything you have worked for has been lost.

**“In Syria, I studied, graduated, had my own house and my own clinic, but now I have to start from scratch,” she says.**

Alia was unable to get into midwifery because her English language proficiency wasn't quite high enough. A few more years learning the language and there is no doubt Alia's incredible passion for midwifery will lead her to becoming a midwife in Dunedin. She is already supporting pregnant women in her community, other refugee-background Syrians, as a friend.

“Working as a midwife is part of me, anytime – midwifery is my passion. It means humanity, resilience, being kind. It means a lot to me.”

## DID YOU KNOW?

New Zealand Red Cross is the primary provider of community refugee settlement in Aotearoa, supporting and empowering new Kiwis as they rebuild their lives. The Red Cross team is always looking for volunteers wanting to help a new Kiwi family get settled in, or for employers who are keen to offer employment to a former refugee.

Visit [redcross.org.nz/refugees](https://www.redcross.org.nz/refugees) to find out how you can get involved.

## HOW TO HELP:

Offer someone from a refugee background a job. Visit [redcross.org.nz/pathways](https://www.redcross.org.nz/pathways).

# The Sound of Dunedin

*“Just a quiet wee choir that does a lot for the community.”*

Since its formation in 1941, the Red Cross Choir has been a pillar of strength in the wider Dunedin community. For 80 years, the group and its members have brought joy to the world by singing at rest homes, hospitals and church services throughout the city. Along the way, they’ve been fundraising for New Zealand Red Cross and supporting many people.

## 80 years of practice

At the time of its inception, the choir was called the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Choir. Its founder, Miss Doris Ramsay, was a VAD nurse at Montecillo Convalescent Home for Soldiers in Dunedin. The choir’s primary objective was to provide entertainment in the form of Christmas carols to patients in hospitals and homes throughout the region.

Decades later, the Red Cross Choir has progressed far

beyond their initial aims. Today, the group plays a pivotal role in residential welfare work and fundraising support for Red Cross throughout the Otago region.

## Carols and camaraderie

Today, the Red Cross Choir is made up of 28 passionate, inspired, wise-cracking women who come from all different walks of life and all different ages.

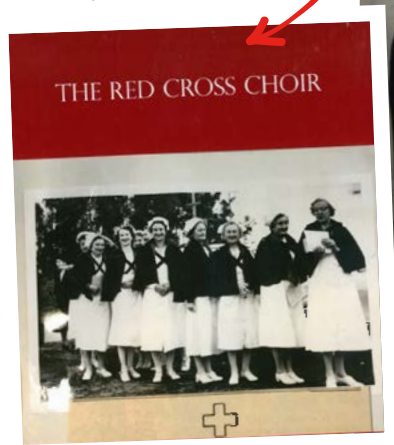
Most members are referred to the choir by someone they know. They, in turn, might recruit another friend or family member to join in the fun. But, what do they have in common? And why do they stay?

**“We’re all here for the love of singing, really,” says one member, who has been with the choir upwards of 15 years.**

“My mother’s in the choir,” says another. “She’s coming up on being a life member – more than 30 years. That was how I got introduced to the group.”

Camaraderie plays a big role in the culture of the choir itself, with most members referred by friends and staying for the social experience. Several

VAD Choir in their veils and dark blue capes with red lining in 1946 (Hocken collection)



members have been with the choir for more than 30 years.

“One lady, who retired last year, had been with the group for 42 years,” says a member. “Another shifted to Christchurch to be with her family, and she’d been with the choir for 45 years.”

## A meaningful impact

The Red Cross Choir puts on an annual concert – usually in October – to raise funds for New Zealand Red Cross, averaging about \$500 in donations per concert. This money helps support the organisation’s Migration Programme and local Youth Emergency Preparedness Programme.

Post-concert, the choir spends the remaining summer months singing in rest homes throughout the region as yet another way to give back to the



The incredible women behind the Red Cross Choir in Dunedin.

community. They visit around 15-20 rest homes every season.

“One time, we sang for a group of residents with dementia,” says one member. “Apparently, they’d been very restless all day, so when we arrived the nurses warned us they’d had a bad day and we shouldn’t expect too much. As soon as we started singing, we had their attention. One resident sang with us – every word – and others got up and danced about the room.

**“We go to a lot of rest homes, but that night was very special. It was so rewarding.”**

### **Merriment and memories**

Although they are based in Dunedin, the Red Cross Choir does not restrict itself to the

outer city limits. Sometimes, they go on tour.

“The choir travels a bit,” begins one member.

“The road trips are a highlight,” says another.

“You haven’t done anything if you haven’t been on a road trip with the Red Cross Choir,” adds the first.

At the first mention of “road trips,” the room immediately fills with the type of nostalgic laughter that makes you wish you’d been part of whatever memory the group is sharing at that moment. What is it about these road trips that makes them so special?

“Oh, the girls have a lovely time on the bus.”

“The day in the bus!”

**“What happens on the bus, stays on the bus.”**

“Some of them get dressed up in wigs and glasses – all sorts of crazy things go on in the bus.”

“Unless you’re in the back seat.”

“Oh, the back seat’s terrible, isn’t it?”

### **A hopeful harmony**

The enduring spirit of the Red Cross Choir is infectious. After spending just a few hours in their presence, you can’t help but find yourself enamoured by each and every one of them. Watching them perform, the joy that they bring to audiences is equally as catching.

### **FEELING INSPIRED? WANT TO GET INVOLVED?**

Contact your local Red Cross branch to find out what they’re up to, and how you can join in on the fun at [redcross.org.nz/get-involved/join-branch](https://www.redcross.org.nz/get-involved/join-branch).



Kathleen reenacting performing CPR on Merv.

# “IT’S THE GREATEST GIFT TO SAVE A LIFE”

On Sunday 20 December 2020, Kathleen Morris woke up early and sat on her deck to enjoy her morning coffee. Her husband Merv, who had gone for a walk earlier that morning, came back and joined her on the deck with his breakfast in hand. Then, the unexpected happened.

“He was sitting in a chair next to me and, within moments, he just lunged off his chair. I went to him, calling his name, then put him into the stable side position, and went to grab the phone,” recalls Kathleen.

Working for New Zealand Red Cross in Dunedin for the past nine years, Kathleen has gone through her fair share of first aid courses, yet this was the first time she had to use her training.

As soon as the operator answered the phone, Kathleen



started CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

“I remember thinking, ‘oh am I doing this correctly?’ On the mannequin, you hear the ‘click click’, but on a person, you don’t.

“I did CPR on Merv for 10 minutes before the emergency services arrived. They came in, we were on the deck so we cleared some chairs and [they went] straight in with the defibrillator, seven shocks with CPR in between,” says Kathleen.



Kathleen Morris and her husband Merv.

Kathleen left the paramedics and moved inside to call her daughter to let her know what had happened and arrange to meet each other at Dunedin Hospital.

“We didn’t know if he was going to live or not,” Kathleen recalls through a shaky voice.

“The police took me to the hospital and by the time I got

there my daughter had arrived.”

When Kathleen arrived at Dunedin Hospital, her husband Merv had already been moved to the intensive care unit, where he spent the next three and a half days in an induced coma.

Merv suffered a cardiac arrest, which occurs when the heart’s electrical system malfunctions.

“They told me that only two per cent of people who have a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital actually survive.

The CPR that I’ve learned with Red Cross over the years obviously set me up to get in there. I knew exactly what I was doing,” says Kathleen.

### Taking recovery one step at a time

Four months on, Kathleen has figured out the best way to move forward is by focusing on her mental health. From the morning her husband collapsed, to helping him get back into a normal routine, she is learning to shift the focus onto her wellbeing.

“He struggled with seeing me struggle. He doesn’t remember it, it all just happened to him – and he was in a coma,” she says, her voice choked with emotion.

“The unknown of why it happened in the first place, that’s been the hardest thing for me. Because Merv is a slim and fit person, you don’t expect this to happen to someone so fit and active.”

Kathleen took her recovery slowly. Easing her way back

in to work, she took the opportunity to work fewer hours, or from home, with the full support of her Red Cross whānau.

After nine years with New Zealand Red Cross, Kathleen decided to step down from her role to allow herself the space to prioritise her wellbeing.

“I have loved my job, but I’ve come to that point where I need to think about myself and try and get some peace.”

### Be prepared, take a first aid course


Through her experience, Kathleen has a simple message to everyone: be prepared by taking a first aid course.

“Everyone should be doing a first aid course at some point. It builds your confidence to jump in and start when you have to,” she says.

Kathleen and Merv live 10 minutes outside of Dunedin and there aren’t any Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) nearby. For her own peace of mind, Kathleen purchased an AED for her home. Her neighbours are welcome to use it if they need to.

“If I hadn’t [stepped in], I wouldn’t have him with me. [Even] if I hadn’t succeeded, I would have to live with that, but at least I tried.”

“It’s the greatest gift to save a life.”

Book a first aid course   
[redcross.org.nz/first-aid](https://redcross.org.nz/first-aid)

# BLOG: FROM AOTEAROA TO ARMENIA, FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE UNIMAGINABLE

**In this blog, New Zealand Red Cross delegate Jessica Timings talks about her time in Armenia, helping the response to the needs of people fleeing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.**

Something roared above us, prompting me to stay alert. From inside the car, I craned my neck to scan the sky, hoping to see what had made the noise, and spotted a grey military jet carving up the clouds. Its engine growled, echoing across the wide road as it sped over us. Just off to our left, two huge conical chimneys jutted up – cooling towers of the nuclear plant just a few kilometres outside the city. Adjusting the mask on my face, I took a moment to take it all in.

Yerevan, Armenia was about as far from Aotearoa as I could imagine being. Even before I arrived, I'd been keeping

up with the news about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I knew that on 27 September 2020, this long-running conflict had escalated significantly, resulting in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of people – mostly mums, kids and older people – being forced to flee the heavy fighting. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, namely Armenian Red Cross Society, Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), have been working incredibly hard to help those affected.

I was asked to work with the IFRC, to support Red Cross in Armenia and work closely with IFRC colleagues in Azerbaijan. My role was to use my knowledge of the Red Cross

and my communications skills to tell the stories of people who were in need and how Red Cross was helping them.

**For me, the decision to go was pretty straightforward. There were people in need, and I had something to offer.**

That's how I ended up in a car heading out of the capital of Armenia, with colleagues from IFRC and Armenian Red Cross Society, toward a small town called Artashat. The car rumbled towards our destination, a kindergarten just beyond Artashat that usually resonates with the joyful sound of hundreds of children. As our car rolled up, the silence was eerie. Just three children played quietly in the dusty yard out front. Washing hung above a rainbow-coloured fence, faded artwork decorated the walls inside.

The kindergarten had been



Support people overseas, donate to [redcross.org.nz/donate/around-world](https://redcross.org.nz/donate/around-world).

Red Cross speaks directly with the people in need to get a better understanding of their circumstances and needs.





closed because of COVID-19, but its doors were open to people from areas affected by the conflict who were in urgent need. At the front door, we were met by the kindergarten's manager who told us that, at its peak, around 80 women, children and elderly were living, sleeping and eating there. They arrived in waves. Most, if not all, of them had no idea when they might be able to return to their homes.

The manager guided us through the cold hallway, into a room that still bore the tell-tale signs of a classroom: colourful blocks and craft items on a shelf, small cots stacked up against a wall. But the room was repurposed, a family of eight sharing the space and two mattresses on the floor. Their shoes were lined up beside the doorway.

One of the daughters shared their story with us: the family left their home almost as soon as the conflict escalated. She recalled the walls of their home shaking from shelling close by.

"Our children were afraid," describes the mother. "One of the boys could not speak for two days. That is when we knew it was not safe."

The kindergarten had basic washing and cooking utilities, shared by all who were staying there. Food and other essential items were provided by Armenian Red Cross Society, local authorities and other agencies.

Though the ceasefire announcement signed on 9 November 2020 meant some were able to return to their homes, more were afraid to go back. The family of eight were among those who felt they could not yet return, but did not know where they could go from there.

Many children are unable to attend school, though some have been able to attend schools near their temporary places of shelter.

"I am in my last year of school, I want to finish. I am planning to continue my education at university next year, but I don't know whether I will be able to get back to school," shares the daughter.

**“We want people to know we are here, we exist, we are not forgotten.”**

I spoke with the family a little longer, and with others staying in the kindergarten.

Some of their stories were so harrowing it was hard to hear, but all the more important because of it. The more Red Cross understands their circumstances and needs, the more – and better – we can help. And by being able to retell their stories to others, I can help increase much-needed support for this response.

After a coffee with the manager and my colleagues, we headed back to the car. We were quiet, still contemplating what we had heard and seen. There is a lot to do.

Many of these people fled with only the clothes on their back, leaving everything behind. They need things that we often take for granted: food, water, blankets and warm clothes. These are basic items that only cost a little but will mean a whole lot to them.

Coming from Aotearoa, stories of war and fighting feel foreign and hard to imagine. After meeting people who have experienced it first hand, I couldn't help but realise how people like me are lucky for not having to go through such an ordeal. It was a reminder that we have a lot to be thankful for and a lot that we can give.

A displaced family neatly lined up their shoes beside the doorway of a classroom that now serves as their living space.



A kindergarten just beyond Artashat decorated with washing hung by displaced people seeking temporary shelter there.



## Auckland/Northland

- The Kerikeri Branch celebrated Neighbours Day Aotearoa with a BBQ and free children's workshop at the local Bunnings Warehouse.
- On 28 March, the Auckland Service Centre went along to CultureFest in Mt Roskill, where they spent the day highlighting volunteering opportunities, showcasing our work with refugee-background families, and promoting readiness and resilience.
- Auckland Emergency Management paid a visit to our Auckland Service Centre to discuss opportunities for further support and collaboration.
- The Waiheke Branch hosted their first Good and Ready Auckland workshop 1 April.
- Auckland hosted three DNA of Red Cross workshops in April (Waiheke Branch, Wiri and Three Kings).



Kerikeri Branch volunteers holding a sausage sizzle to celebrate Neighbours Day Aotearoa.

Young people from all over New Zealand get together to have meaningful conversations and discuss the future of youth engagement in Aotearoa.



# SNIPPETS

## FROM THE REGIONS

New Zealand Red Cross people are doing amazing work all over Aotearoa. Check out what's been happening in the regions.

Lovely day for a garden party in New Plymouth.



## Taranaki/Manawatū

- In February, our Taranaki team hosted a garden party to thank all their volunteers and members for their ongoing support.
- For Neighbours Day Aotearoa, the Manawatū team held a successful community plant swap event at the Palmerston North Library. Many people attended and brought a range of plants, produce and seeds to swap.
- Work is underway to roll out a free Introduction to Psychosocial Support Workshop for community groups and organisations in the region. Watch this space!



Red Cross in action at Neighbours Day in the Bay of Plenty.

## Waikato/Bay of Plenty

- Our amazing volunteers organised a spontaneous pop-up book fair at the Waikato Service Centre in March. They plan to hold three more pop-up book fair events throughout the year.
- We celebrated the birthday of one of our members in the Bay of Plenty – Ann Tutbury, who recently turned 90 years old, had been volunteering since 1964 as a Meals on Wheels driver.
- On 11 March, our Cross-Cultural Workers from Auckland and Hamilton came together for a hui at Lake Karapiro.
- The Bay of Plenty team celebrated Neighbours Day on 21 March. They showcased the Red Cross ute and trailer, played a few games and provided AED training and disaster readiness information.



Cross-Cultural Workers Hui.



Ann Tutbury celebrating her 90th birthday.

## East Coast/Wairarapa

- Morning teas were held in Wairoa, Hastings and Waipukurau in March to thank our wonderful volunteer drivers who have supported the Community Transport programme over the years.
- On 26 March, the Hastings team put on a plant swap event for Neighbours Day Aotearoa. Despite the 7.30am start, more than 40 stakeholders and members turned up to swap conversation, plants and produce over a cooked breakfast.
- As part of Good and Ready, our East Coast team has agreed to support Tairāwhiti Civil Defence Emergency Management in their submission to Te Puni Kokiri for funding through the Kāinga Rua: Marae Resilience and Emergency Preparedness Programme.
- For Neighbours Day Aotearoa, Red Cross in Wairarapa held three plant swap events at the community gardens in Masterton, Carterton and Martinborough.



Great Plant Swap event in Wairarapa to celebrate Neighbours Day Aotearoa.

## Wellington

- New Zealand Red Cross was recognised as the Charity of the Year by the Mana Embroiderers' Guild in March.
- A hui was held on 22 March to inform members about the launch of Good and Ready in Wellington.
- Neighbours Day 2021 was a big success, with

local staff and members enjoying everything from a 'Green Lunch' to swapping seeds and plants. The Wellington Branch also made an appearance at the Newtown Festival, where they were spotted chatting to the public about all things neighbourly and Red Cross.

- On 1 May, the Wellington Area Council held their Area Planning Forum.



Porirua group members with Area Council Chair Marty Barrett at the Mana Embroiderers' Guild.

Good and Ready Wellington Information Hui.



## Tasman/Marlborough

- Our Blenheim team celebrated Neighbours Day Aotearoa with a multicultural tea party, held in collaboration with Neighbourhood Support Marlborough and the Marlborough Multicultural Centre.
- The Blenheim team co-hosted an information session for members of the local Pasifika community about emergency preparedness and the importance of maintaining healthy homes.
- On 8 May, World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, the Nelson team held a small celebration to recognise all of the refugee support volunteers who had completed more than five placements with families.
- On 27 April, the Tasman/Marlborough Area Council held their annual Area Forum.



Multicultural tea party in Blenheim to celebrate Neighbours Day Aotearoa.



The Nelson refugee support team celebrating the hard work of our dedicated volunteers.



Norm (Secretary General) and Kerry (National President) taking part in a few games during the Southland Area Forum in Invercargill.

## Canterbury/West Coast

- The Christchurch disaster response team held an event for past and present disaster response volunteers to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Christchurch earthquake.
- Earlier this year, with support from the Migration

team, our Mid-Canterbury Branches donated several first aid kits to former refugee families.

- The Ashburton Branch generously donated three AEDs to Tinwald and Creek Road Shopping Centres, as well as a local Scout Hall.

- In March, the Methven Branch, with support from one of our Disaster Welfare and Support Teams, hosted a stall at the A&P Show.
- The Timaru Area Branch donated kitchen appliances and cleaning supplies to former refugee families.

Families gathered together to celebrate five years since Dunedin became a refugee settlement location in 2016.



Disaster response volunteers gathered to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Christchurch earthquakes.

## Otago/Southland

- In late March, we celebrated the five-year anniversary of refugee settlement in Dunedin. The local team put on an event that was attended by well over 300 people, including many former refugee families, refugee support volunteers, local stakeholders and community members.
- In March, a pōwhiri was held to welcome former refugees and other migrants to Dunedin.
- Dunedin celebrated Neighbours Day Aotearoa with a community lunchtime BBQ held across the road from the service centre.
- Queenstown celebrated Neighbours Day Aotearoa with an event at Happiness House, attended by 70 people.
- The South Dunedin Street

Festival took place on 27 March. The local Red Cross team helped plan and coordinate the event's Wellbeing Zone.

- A DWST deployment training was held in Gore, with teams from Dunedin, Queenstown, Gore and Invercargill in attendance.
- The Otago Area Forum was held on 15 April. Membership awards included one 40-year award and two 30-year awards, as well as three 10-year awards.
- Our teams in Invercargill have relocated to one service centre at 242 Dee St. Kaumātua Michael Skerrett came to bless the building.
- The Southland Area Forum was held in March, with a special visit from Norm (Secretary General) and Kerry (National President).

(from left to right), disaster response volunteers Nitin, Thomas, Deepa and Nathan at Crank Up Day in Invercargill.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**Olivier Lacoua**, a strong supporter of ours, challenged himself to run 100 marathons to raise money for New Zealand Red Cross. In April, his incredible goal was finally achieved. How did he do it? Why?

## How did you get involved with New Zealand Red Cross?

30 years ago, on a school trip to Madrid, I had an accident where I suffered severe burns on my arms and legs. I was taken to a hospital where the local Red Cross Society provided me with first aid. The Red Cross helped rush me back to my home country – France – for further medical assistance. They were so kind and reassuring. I've never forgotten this kindness, nor the accident, and thus began my fitness journey (with a difference).

## Why did you decide to run 100 marathons?

My first marathon was in 2008, in Christchurch, and while I didn't have any time in mind, I was very happy to finish in under four hours! I decided to put a target on my running

and a charity behind it. The natural choice was Red Cross. I planned to run 100 marathons, ending with the Marathon de Paris in 2020. I aimed to raise \$26,200 based on the 26.2 miles of a marathon. For a few years I ran 10-12 marathons annually. My aim was to raise awareness about the great things that New Zealand Red Cross was doing, but also about maintaining good health and being involved in the community. In 2018, during a trip to France, I decided to run the Marathon de Paris ahead of schedule. I'm so happy I did! I wouldn't have been able to last year because of COVID-19. I ran my 100th marathon in the same city it all started – Christchurch. It was so special to share this event with all my Kiwi friends and, in particular, my two daughters who both



ran half marathons on the day to support me!

## What part of Red Cross do you admire the most?

With no hesitation, the part I admire the most is the level of kindness from everyone working or volunteering. Regardless of where you're from, your gender, your ethnicity, they provide vital emotional and practical support in our communities.

## What's your best fundraising tip?

Challenge yourself before you challenge others to give you a donation. THINK BIG! Draft a fundraising plan with a specific target and timeframe. Share your plan with family and friends. They will be the first ones to encourage you and offer their support to reach your target. Don't worry if you don't smash it the first time. Experiment! You can try to set up a fundraising page, organise a private dinner party, run a special movie screening, share your fundraising story to local companies and encourage them to donate, ask your local pub to organise a quiz night... Just try your best. Good luck!



## IN WOOLSTON, CHRISTCHURCH

CHECK OUT  
OUR NEW  
RED CROSS  
SHOP



Our Red Cross Shop in Woolston opened its doors to the public in May 2021. We are proud and excited to become part of the Woolston community and would love to see you in store, so head over to

**6/8 Portman Street,  
Woolston, Christchurch.**

The Woolston shop offers good quality, pre-loved clothing, homeware, electrical appliances, furniture and much more at affordable prices. It also sells brand-new reading glasses and trendy sunnies!

We have Red Cross Shops in every corner of Aotearoa, which all help divert approximately 1.8 million items from landfill every year. If you own any good quality items that you no longer need, please consider donating them to one of our shops.

You can also come and join our amazing team by signing up as a Red Cross Shop volunteer. By sparing just a few hours every week, you will make a personal contribution to the continuous delivery of Red Cross' much-needed support to people in need across Aotearoa and abroad.



For more information, visit [redcross.org.nz/red-cross-shops](https://redcross.org.nz/red-cross-shops).

### GET INVOLVED


-  Join today at [redcross.org.nz/get-involved](https://redcross.org.nz/get-involved)
-  Volunteer with us
-  Learn first aid
-  Donate
-  Leave a lasting gift in your will
-  Fundraise to help others

### Join the conversation

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for all the latest New Zealand Red Cross news and updates.

-  [NewZealandRedCross](https://www.facebook.com/NewZealandRedCross)
-  [@NZRedCross](https://twitter.com/NZRedCross)
-  [nzredcross](https://www.instagram.com/nzredcross)

### HOW TO HELP:

 Head to [redcross.org.nz/volunteer](https://redcross.org.nz/volunteer) to find out more.



**HERE FOR  
GOOD**

**REDCROSS.ORG.NZ**



**Volunteer**



**Fundraise**



**Shop**



**Donate**



**Learn First Aid**