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American Red Cross Holds 87th Annual Meeting

- *William Darr, Red Cross Northeast Service Area Resource Council, delivers keynote address;*
- *Individuals and organizations recognized for support of local Red Cross*

The American Red Cross of the Greater Lehigh Valley held its 87th Annual Meeting Wednesday, Sept. 29, at Allentown Symphony Hall.

Red Cross Chairman Joseph Stockunas of Air Products and Chemicals presided over the meeting which drew an attendance of more than 85 volunteers, community leaders, donors and employees.

In his remarks, Stockunas stressed the importance of the Red Cross role in preparing communities for potential emergencies through the agency's national Together We Prepare initiative. The campaign encourages the public to take five action steps for preparedness: make a plan, build a kit, get trained, volunteer, and donate blood.

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“Together We Prepare is not just a motto; it is a way of life,” said Stockunas. “It is more essential now than ever that we help keep our families, co-workers, friends and neighbors safe. “We have the tools and plans in place to see that every member of this community is prepared

for any type of emergency. Collaboration with area United Way agencies, schools, businesses and other organizations is key to fulfilling our promise to help keep the Greater Lehigh Valley safe.”

Keynote speaker William Darr, member of the American Red Cross Northeast Service Area Resource Council, punctuated the importance of preparedness. “The American Red Cross can help every person prepare for emergencies and make their communities safer in today’s uncertain times,” said Darr. “Our mission is very clear now: to be America’s preparedness partner and disaster response leader.”

Darr, of Indiana, Pa., was appointed to the American Red Cross Northeast Service Area Resource Council last July and serves as chairman of its public support committee. Previously elected to the National Board of Governors in 1994 and re-elected in 1997, he served as first vice chairman of the board and chairman of its audit committee. He was former chair of the Red Cross Indiana County (Pa.) Chapter. Darr currently is a practicing attorney with Barbor, Sottile & Darr in Indiana, Pa.

Stockunas, Darr and Red Cross Executive Director John Hughes acknowledged area community partners, companies and media that helped Red Cross launch its Together We Prepare initiative last year. Recognized were: Girl Scouts-Great Valley Council; Minsi Trails Council, Boy Scouts of America; Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.; Capital BlueCross; Highmark Blue Shield; Miller-Keystone Blood Center; PPL; The Morning Call; and The Express-Times.

American Red Cross volunteer and board member Jose Perna of Bethlehem received the Clara Barton Honor Award, the highest award the Red Cross bestows on volunteers. It

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recognizes meritorious service in volunteer leadership positions held over a period of years. Recipients of the award are inducted into the Clara Barton Honor Society.

“Jose is a quiet leader and embodies the term ‘leading by example,’ ” said Robert McGovern, vice chairman of the board, in his introduction of Perna. “As a volunteer for the past seven years at the committee and board levels, Jose has been a leader in initiating change at this Chapter.

“He asks the tough questions of the management team and offers suggestions and assistance in how to effectively provide improved services to the community. He is always willing to offer his expertise.”

Other awards presented were: The Good Neighbor Award, given to local businesses, corporations and agencies that have provided significant, ongoing support to the Red Cross; the Workplace Training Award in recognition for a company’s or agency’s commitment to provide Red Cross training in lifesaving skills to their employees; and the Tiffany Award for Employee Excellence, in recognition of superior job performance demonstrated by an employee of the American Red Cross.

Good Neighbor Award winners were: Coca-Cola Bottling Company of the Lehigh Valley and Lehigh Valley Coca-Cola Syrup Plant for donating beverages to offset Red Cross supplies in response to disasters in the community and for Red Cross fund-raising events and; Mauch Chunk Trust Company of Nesquehoning, for providing refreshments for more than 200 volunteer blood donors at Red Cross blood drives; and PenTeleData, of Palmerton, who collaborated with the Red Cross to create the Military Video Connection program, giving military families the means to send a three-minute video e-mail message to their loved one serving abroad.

Workplace Training Awards were presented to Nestle and the Northern Lehigh School District.

The Tiffany Award for Employee Excellence was presented to Margot Hillman, manager-information technology at the local Red Cross.

During the business portion of the meeting, five outgoing board members were recognized for their contributions to the Red Cross: Jim Dunleavy, Easton Hospital; Deborah Evans, Moravian College; Bob Gedney, community volunteer; Helle Jepsen, community volunteer; and Jose Perna, Saucon Valley Mortgage Company.

Re-elected to a second three-year term were: S. K. Hammi Kapoor, IKN, Inc.; and John Yanek, PPL.

In addition, the following individuals were elected to the board for their first three-year term: Stephanie Bush, marketing communications coordinator at Victaulic Company, who will fulfill the youth board position; Scott Friedman, vice president, account services at swb&r; Betsy Torrence, community volunteer; Robin Wolak, event coordinator at Lehigh Valley Financial Group; and John Yanes, chief operating officer at Easton Hospital.

Officers elected for 2004-2005 were: Stockunas, chapter chair; McGovern, vice chair; Patti Gates Smith, secretary; and Thomas Brown, treasurer.

The American Red Cross of the Greater Lehigh Valley serves more than 660,000 residents in Carbon, Lehigh and Northampton counties. Last year the Red Cross provided health and safety education training and emergency relief services to more than 20,000 Greater Lehigh Valley residents. For more information about your local Red Cross or volunteer opportunities, call (610) 865-4400 or visit www.redcrosslv.org.

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