



**American  
Red Cross**

Heart of Tennessee Chapter

Heart of Tennessee Chapter  
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*News Release*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Local Red Cross Volunteer Takes the “Dis” Out of Disability**

**(MURFREESBORO) September 23, 2011-** James Goodman has been a Red Cross Volunteer for the Heart of Tennessee Chapter since 2007. A disabled veteran, injured in Desert Storm in 1991, James, who can stand for very brief periods of time, but uses a specialized wheelchair to get around, does not let his disabilities limit his ability to contribute to the wellbeing of others.

James was deployed by his chapter to assist the victims of the recent Pennsylvania floods by working as a member of a three-person team driving and dispensing food from a Red Cross emergency response vehicle. James uses custom-made ramps to get his wheelchair into and out of the vehicle, and he performs all the functions necessary to provide service to the clients. James rises an hour early each day to have time to soak in a bath of hot water to make sure his body is ready for the 12 to 14 hour days he puts in to serve the people in need.

At the local level, James worked as a shelter manager in the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav in Nashville in 2008, and he has also provided disaster assessment services when needed. On a daily basis, James is considered critical to the operation of his chapter. He is the Disaster Action Captain Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm and one week each month from 5pm to 8 am every evening and all day on weekends and holidays. In this role, he leads a team of volunteers who respond at any time of the day or night to assist victims of local disasters, mostly single family home fires. He and his team members provide financial assistance to help replace food, clothing, and shoes lost in the fire and assist fire victims with short-term lodging. They also make referrals to Red Cross nurses and mental health professionals when appropriate and to partner agencies in the community.

James assists the families of service members as the chapter caseworker for the Services to Armed Forces Committee which covers eight counties. James is also an instructor, teaching classes in disaster relief for Red Cross volunteers. He says that “being able to volunteer with the Red Cross gives me a real sense of purpose.”

When asked about how he has been treated by the Red Cross, James says, “Everyone has been open and accepting; they have offered every applicable accommodation to support me as a volunteer.” He was encouraged to take the courses necessary to obtain his emergency response vehicle certification, and he is permitted to pull his wheelchair on a trailer behind the vehicle when he goes out on calls.

James has been at work in Pennsylvania since September 11. Jim Kuhlmann, a retired physician who is a Mass Care Feeding Manager, says of James, “He is a great addition to our team. He is enthusiastic, upbeat, and completes all tasks without supervision. James always offers to do more than is required.”

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Brian Toll, the Emergency Services Director at the Murfreesboro Chapter, considers James to be “indispensable.” He is the most active volunteer they have. Brian says, “If something needs to be done, you give it to James, and he takes care of it. I don’t want to think about what we would do if he stopped showing up; he keeps us looking forward, working to make things better. James is well respected, not only at the chapter, but in the region. He is a humble guy, but his work speaks volumes.” Brian calls James a “workhorse.” He goes onto say, “I know there are some who have perceptions about people with disabilities, but there is nothing James can’t do. Anyone with disabilities who would like to volunteer in our chapter is very welcome.”

So what advice does James give to people with disabilities? He says, “Don’t hesitate. Go to your local or regional chapter and volunteer. Regardless of your disability, there is a job you can do at the American Red Cross.” And with James as an example, who could say this isn’t true?

*The Heart of Tennessee Chapter of the American Red Cross provides vital emergency assistance to help victims of local disasters in Rutherford, Bedford, Cannon, Franklin, Coffee, Lincoln, Marshall & Moore counties. Over the past year the Chapter trained nearly 15,000 people in CPR & First Aid, Babysitting and Aquatics training, and provided pre-deployment briefings and emergency communications for over 640 active duty military personnel and their families. Over 13,177 pints of life-saving blood were collected from the community last year. All of these services are made possible by over 320 dedicated local Red Cross volunteers as well as through generous gifts from the local community. To get more information please call 615) 893-4272 or log on to [www.midtnredcross.org](http://www.midtnredcross.org).*

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