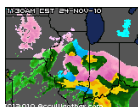


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American Red Cross helps families displaced by fire

By NICOLE WESKERNA - nweskerne@daily-chronicle.com

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MALTA – A local family said it is thankful for the assistance it received this week after its house caught fire Sunday afternoon.

Sharon and Richard Blecksmith of Malta said they are grateful for the help they got from the DeKalb County Chapter of the American Red Cross on Sunday when a fire broke out at their home at 21821 Willrett Road in Malta.

"They were very comforting that first night in particular," Sharon Blecksmith said. "They were really, really concerned and caring."

The Blecksmith's house has been deemed a total loss, she said, and will be demolished. Everything in the house was ruined as well.

Sharon Blecksmith said the Red Cross gave the couple money to buy some winter clothes, and they were able to buy leashes for their two dogs. They also received a "comfort kit" that contained items like toothbrushes, toothpaste and soap.

The Blecksmiths were also provided with a checklist of things to do after a fire, like turn off their phone services. Though they have found temporary housing, they are still trying to find a way to take care of their chickens without any running water.

"It's pretty sad, especially for this to happen around the holidays," said Dean Richardson, a Red Cross volunteer who assisted the Blecksmiths during Sunday's fire.



Show Bar family in the county also received assistance this week from the Red Cross after their house sustained about \$75,000 in damage late Monday night after a fire broke out in the attic of their home in the 2800 block of Greenwood Acres Drive in DeKalb.

The DeKalb Fire Department was called about 10:35 p.m. for a report of a structure fire, according to a news release from the department. Several family members were at home at the time of the fire and were alerted to the fire by the family dog, according to fire officials.

Upon arrival, firefighters found little evidence of fire but a further search "revealed a significant fire in the attic above the foyer of the home," according to the news release.

The cause appears to be electrical in nature in an area of recessed light in the area of origin, according to the news release.

No one was injured in the fire. Rona Hardt, spokeswoman for the DeKalb County chapter of the American Red Cross, said that family is back in their home but that the organization was on scene Monday night to offer assistance and comfort.

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Richardson said the Red Cross typically helps families find housing if their homes are uninhabitable, and also helps contact insurance companies.

The organization will also find eyeglasses, or contact physicians and pharmacists to refill prescriptions lost in a fire.

They do not accept donations in the form of items like clothing and groceries, but monetary donations go toward helping families purchase those necessities.

Hardt said that because the American Red Cross does not rely on state or federal funds, donations from the community are especially important.

Hardt said 91 cents of every dollar donated stays in the community.

"Their donations definitely get put to good use," she said.



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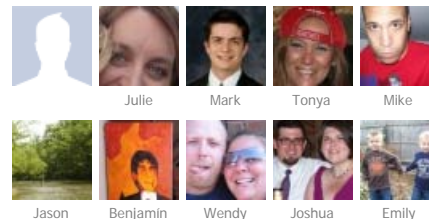
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