

Red Cross holds disaster shelter drill

The American Red Cross DeKalb County Chapter's Disaster Action Team recently performed a shelter drill at Evangelical Free Church of DeKalb/Sycamore to simulate opening a shelter after a natural disaster.

This drill was intended to help build the partnership between the Red Cross and the church by educating the church and DAT volunteers on the shelter process. About 35 volunteers were at the shelter drill; approximately 22 DAT members and 13 church volunteers. With donations from Wal-Mart and the Evangelical Free church, both breakfast and lunch were provided at the event.

The volunteers went through the drill as if a devastating tornado hit the DeKalb area and they needed to set up and staff a shelter. DAT volunteers handled all logistics from opening the shelter and [registration](#) of clients to feeding and boarding. In a real life shelter situation, the Red Cross would have staff on location 24 hours a day until the shelter closes. Besides the obvious purpose of shelter, these facilities also provide the clients with food, water, sleeping arrangements, health and [mental health services](#), and media to keep in contact with the situation.

"I think the shelter simulation drill went very well," Dean Richardson, director of Emergency Services said in a [news release](#). "I believe the DAT volunteers gained valuable experience from today."

A team scenario discussion was held after the drill to allow questions, answers and comments to bring up problems or concerns that occurred during the drill. Disaster preparedness drills are held to ensure that if a natural disaster happens, the local Red Cross DAT team will be better equipped to meet the needs of the DeKalb County residents.

Richardson urges the importance of partnerships with churches like St. Johns of Sycamore and the Evangelical Free Church of DeKalb/Sycamore.

"We thank our current partners, but would appreciate the opportunity to create new partnerships with potential sheltering capabilities throughout DeKalb County," Richardson said in the release.

Contact the chapter at 815-756-7339 to discuss a sheltering partnership.

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