

Westmoreland-Chestnut Ridge Red Cross Will Merge with Neighboring Chapter as Part of Nationwide Restructure, Merger Provides Greater Response Capacity and Resources

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In an effort to make more efficient use of donated dollars and better serve area residents, the American Red Cross Westmoreland-Chestnut Ridge Chapter will merge with the American Red Cross Armstrong County Chapter to form the American Red Cross Westmoreland-Armstrong Chapter, effective Sept. 1.

Amid a slumping economy and increasing costs, Red Cross chapters across the country are consolidating as a way to streamline operations and reduce overhead costs while increasing programming and disaster response capacity by sharing resources.

Locally, the newly formed chapter will be managed by Executive Director Donna Pacella, currently the Executive Director of the Westmoreland-Chestnut Ridge Chapter; she will also assume Executive Director duties at the neighboring Indiana County Chapter. Pacella has worked with the Red Cross for 30 years, including the past 17 years as an Executive Director.

The chapter will also work more closely with other chapters throughout the 13-county Southwestern Pennsylvania Region to share resources, improving the local disaster response capacity while consolidating back office functions.

Additionally, the Red Cross has redesigned its Preparedness, Health and Safety programs – including First Aid and CPR classes – in an effort to increase training opportunities in communities throughout the country. These programs will no longer be managed by Red Cross chapters, but instead they will now be coordinated by the Red Cross as a devoted, nationally-networked operation focused exclusively on increasing the number of people who learn lifesaving skills in all communities.

The lifesaving courses will include technologically advanced features such as standardized online course search and registration, digital course materials and free online refreshers. Additionally, successful completion of these classes will now result in two-year certifications, replacing the previous one-year certification.

The new chapter officially forms on Sept. 1, though many changes will be implemented in phases. During the transition, there will be no interruption in Red Cross services as the organization works to carryout its mission to help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Also in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Region, the Beaver-Lawrence Chapter has merged with the Butler-Mercer Counties Chapter, and similar streamlining of back office functions and resource sharing will occur at the Keystone Chapter and Southwestern Pennsylvania Chapter.