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Red Cross selects local heroes to honor

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THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Who's a hero?

A young woman who donated her kidney to her former volleyball coach, a man who helped two teens survive a terrible car crash, and an Army Ranger seriously injured when his Humvee hit a buried bomb in Afghanistan, according to the Sonoma-Mendocino chapter of the American Red Cross, which Thursday named its annual list of heroes.

Honorees were selected from more than 100 nominations in 10 categories and will be featured at the Red Cross Heroes Breakfast in April.

The honorees are:

Military: Serving in Afghanistan, Army Spc. Ryan Sobel received serious injuries when the Humvee in which he was riding hit a buried bomb. The Army Ranger helped fight off an ambush by Taliban fighters, receiving the Purple Heart. He remains in rehabilitation for his injuries Fort Bragg, N.C.

Good Samaritan, youth: Cody Hicks donated a kidney to save the life of friend and volleyball coach Nancy Archer-Crofut.

Good Samaritan, adult: Agostino "Marco" Aimo, a nursing student, dragged a passenger from a burning car, then went back and pulled the driver to safety with help from a police officer.

Good Samaritan, senior: The late Mary Isaak is honored for her legacy as co-founder of Committee on the Shelterless, or COTS, in Petaluma.

Law enforcement: Beverly Liberman, director of the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Academy of Sonoma County. Described as hard-working, caring and skilled, Liberman ensures that those who wish to become volunteer chaplains are trained with compassion and understanding.

Educator: For 17 years, Rebecca Kress has been on a mission to keep the Russian River clean. Through Russian River Unlimited, she has led volunteer efforts to remove toxic debris from the river.

Medical: Nurse Laura Roehrick has developed a special program to heal feet that are at risk of amputation because of diabetes. She volunteers in Africa.

Help for animals: Lee Justice and Robert Pope, a retired couple with a love for horses, are founders of Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center. Program clients with any of more than 60 different physical or mental disabilities learn to ride on specially trained therapy horses.

Rescue professional: Battalion Chief Jan Wasson Smith of the Anderson Valley Fire Department was named for creating a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing team. The chief also drives ambulances and firetrucks responding to emergencies.

Mendocino County hero of the year: Eric Glassey serves as board president to three non-profit groups that improve lives, has served as a hospice worker and led a prison ministry. He is also an organ donor, having given a kidney in November to his wife, Alison.

The Heroes breakfast will be April 30 at the Doubletree Hotel in Rohnert Park. Those interested in attending the event, which is also a fund-raiser for relief and disaster response, can call the Red Cross at 577-7600.

There is no set donation amount asked, but traditionally, attendees are encouraged to donate at least \$1 for every year that the American Red Cross has served the American people. The American Red Cross was founded 127 years ago.

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