



Meet a Red Crosser: Kathleen Keating



It was 3 a.m. when Kathleen Keating and her son found themselves outside their burning home, shocked and disoriented by their unfolding personal disaster. Soon after, volunteers with the Canadian Red Cross arrived to help guide them through the next steps. That was eighteen years ago, and she has not forgotten how Personal Disaster Assistance Responders bring order and comfort to confusion and adversity. Keating says the help they received “truly made a difference.”

Today, Keating is a PDA volunteer with the Canadian Red Cross. After volunteering for two years, she completed her first national deployment in September of 2017. She went to Saskatoon and then Prince Albert to assist the indigenous people evacuated from their homes as wildfires threatened their communities in northern Saskatchewan. Being a member of one of several organizations that helped ensure the well-being of people in crisis has forever changed her.

Keating is known for her skillful ability to focus on tasks that need to be done and adhere to a tight schedule to accomplish them. She thrives on the pressure that comes with assessing a difficult situation and quickly coming up with viable options to overcome problems, but discovered that her get-things-done style had to be adjusted to better accommodate the people who needed help. Keeping their unique circumstances in mind, she adapted her approach and discovered new ways she could be effective. In the process, she became an even more compassionate person.

She admired how the council members of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation remained calm throughout the crisis. Witnessing how a wide network of people could pull together in challenging times made her deployment very positive and memorable. Keating met many who were “so kind, caring and giving, with endless compassion.” Being in the company of people who live up to those ideals made her realize that’s the kind of community she wants to be part of for the rest of her life.

With her son now grown, Keating has more time and flexibility, and has her heart set on international deployments. This goal affects every decision she makes. She currently works as a consultant managing various communication and fundraising campaigns, and recently has taken on short-term contracts that allow time to continue training and volunteering for the Red Cross. Professional fundraising often requires her to ask people for things, unlike volunteering, which provides her with “a wonderful opportunity to just give.”

Keating views the Red Cross as the way to make her time and energy matter the most. She welcomes anyone who wants to know more about national deployments to contact her. In the meantime, she’s looking forward to more adventures in the company of the caring volunteers of the Canadian Red Cross.

Written by: Colleen MacDonald, January, 2018