



MEET MARILEE – A VOLUNTEER STORY THANKS TO **YOU**

United Way of Siouxland works to better the lives of people in the community. We fund 30 programs that fight for the health, education and financial stability of Siouxland. This allows for volunteer stories like Marilee's.

Marilee Thomas is a fan of the American Red Cross and thankful for the training, knowledge and skills she learned as a caseworker and Disaster Action Team (DAT) volunteer.

When the urgent call came to help Cedar Rapids flood victims; she jumped at the chance to help. Within hours she was on the road with Red Cross volunteers from Siouxland to open emergency shelters in northeast Iowa and put her training to good use.

When she arrived, Marilee says all the training courses she had completed over the past three years came to her in a rush and there was plenty of work to be done.

A “flood of generosity” transpired as victim's needs were uncovered, and ultimately met. When a walk-in volunteer was asked to go get milk for a young mother and her children, he returned with more volunteers and milk, a baby bathtub, juice boxes, coloring books and new pillows for everyone in the shelter.

Marilee's local and national training taught her that there is a different psychology needed with flood victims who are often in shock, exhausted and may not even know what their immediate needs are.

She says some people simply requested a safe haven to recover from immediate danger, while others needed to get away from scammers who patrol disturbed neighborhoods for profit.

Marilee admits her experience came with one regret: that she had to turn over the reins and go back home. She loved the experience of stepping out of her own life to help others. She says people didn't need to know her name, just as she didn't need to know theirs. But one thing she did know, no matter who took her place, the needs of those victims will be met by the next Red Cross volunteers. It's good to know that wherever a disaster strikes, Red Cross volunteers are trained and ready to respond.

Marilee is just one of the many people helping others through your donation to United Way of Siouxland.