



“On

Call”

As a team leader for the Red Cross Disaster Action Team, senior Daniel B. Moar '04 is responding to emergency situations throughout the city and recruiting an army of Canisius volunteers to do the same.

IT'S 2 A.M. ON A COLD WINTER NIGHT when the phone rings in the Delavan Townhouse apartment of **Daniel B. Moar '04**, a communication studies/political science major. It's not a wrong number. It's not a call from friends. It's the Greater Buffalo Chapter of the American Red Cross with word that fire has broken out in a home on the East Side of Buffalo.

As a volunteer team leader for the organization's Disaster Action Team (DAT), it is Moar's responsibility to notify other DAT members that an emergency response is necessary. He gets out of bed, gets dressed, makes his phone calls, then reports to the fire scene where he and the other DAT volunteers provide much-needed assistance to the fire victims. It is likely he'll have several more of these calls before the month is through.

"The first thing we do on-site is interview the victims to find out what their needs are," explains Moar. "We then fill out the relevant paperwork and make arrangements for them to stay in a hotel, if necessary."

Once the firefighters clear the scene,

Moar and the other DAT members enter the home to perform a damage assessment. They go from room to room, documenting every item that has sustained fire damage.

Like many people, Moar felt compelled to volunteer with the American Red Cross following the September 11 terrorist attacks. After a period of time, some people stopped volunteering and went back to their normal lives. Not Moar. Seeing other people "drop off" was incentive for him to do more, according to Kenneth Turner, director of emergency services for the Greater Buffalo Chapter of the American Red Cross.

"Dan became very determined," says Turner. "He made it his personal mission to recruit other Canisius students to volunteer with the DAT, which is a testament to the quality of his character."

The primary role of the Red Cross' DAT is to provide emergency food, clothing, shelter and medical care to victims of emergencies such as fires, floods, natural disasters and hazardous material spills. In Buffalo and the surrounding region, most DAT responses involve fires. To provide a wide range of relief services, the American Red Cross depends on the generosity of the American public and the support of dedicated volunteers.

To recruit volunteers, Moar started talking to his friends about the DAT, and the challenges and rewards of providing disaster assistance. His enthusiasm spread and in fall 2002, six Canisius students signed on to volunteer and participate in DAT training. In the three-hour course, students learned how to interview fire victims, perform damage assessments, fill out paperwork and provide vouchers that fire victims

need to stay at hotels, eat at restaurants or buy new clothing.

The initiation of those six Canisius students marked the beginnings of what would eventually become the Canisius College

Red Cross Club, an official student organization complete with a faculty advisor (Dr. Melissa Wanzer, associate professor of communication studies) and a constitution drafted by the club's founder – Dan Moar. Unlike most clubs, however, the Canisius Red Cross Club does not hold regular meetings or events. Rather, the organization's activities put members out in the community to assist fire victims.

"You're always going out on site, doing something hands-on," says Moar. "I like the idea of an organization that is constantly sending you out to get things done and to help people."

By fall 2003, Moar forged ahead on another recruitment campaign to enlist more Red Cross volunteers. He posted flyers, knocked on neighbors' doors and sent broadcast E-mails to all undergraduates. But his most effective method was encouraging current Red Cross Club members to spread the word about their work in the community.

"They started telling their friends about this club where you can help people and get hands-on experience that's great for your résumé," explains Moar.

The result of Moar's efforts was exponential growth. With a current membership of 40, the Canisius Red Cross Club now makes up one-third of the agency's total DAT volunteers. One student who answered Moar's call for volunteers was Hasheen De Berry '04, a former fire victim.

"When I was in second grade, growing up in New York City, I came home from school one day to find our apartment completely destroyed by fire," recalls De Berry. "I was devastated." Now vice president of the club, De Berry remembers the kindness and



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compassion of the American Red Cross volunteers, who assisted his family after the fire. "One of the things I clearly remember is going to the Red Cross for necessities and temporary housing, so when I found out about the Canisius Red Cross Club, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to give back and provide the same services which benefited my family."

What started as a single volunteer initiative, motivated by the horrors of the September 11 attacks, is now a literal army of volunteers, which the Red Cross has come to rely upon heavily.

"Dan is a godsend," says Turner. "It has been extremely helpful to us to have the Canisius volunteers. Given that 97 percent of the time DAT volunteers respond to fires, we would be lost without them."

Although Canisius volunteers are among the youngest DAT members, Turner says they always demonstrate maturity and grace under pressure. He recalls one fire response last spring.

"The families affected by the fire were refugees from Somalia, and there were language barriers and other challenges," says Turner. "Watching the students interview the adults and interact with the younger children, it became apparent to me that these students were well-seasoned beyond their years."

"People who have just lost everything aren't always very stable emotionally," adds Moar, who believes the most important thing a DAT volunteer can do is provide compassion and understanding. "It's learning how to relate to people," which is something he developed from previous volunteer work. Moar served as a deacon at the Presbyterian church in his

college's law fraternity. Given all their school work and other student activities, Turner is amazed the student volunteers are able to take on the challenging role of DAT volunteer.

"Their primary responsibility is their education," says Turner. "For them to juggle their academic workload and extra-curricular activities, then take time out to assist someone in an emergency illustrates just how special these young people are. The college should be commended for supporting students in their community volunteer work."

Moar is currently working on a long-term plan to ensure the collaboration between Canisius and the Red Cross will continue long after he graduates and heads to Georgetown Law School, where he will study to become a military lawyer.

"I want to become a trial lawyer and doing it this way will enable me to get into the courtroom right away," says Moar. Again, he is driven to roll up his sleeves and go where the action is.

In the meantime, Turner hopes to see Moar's idea of a Red Cross club replicated at other area colleges, something he feels would be a great benefit to both the individuals served by the DAT and the students.

"Through the Canisius Red Cross Club, the Red Cross has gained well-qualified volunteers, the students' lives are being enriched by helping others, and fire victims are getting the help they desperately need in a prompt, effective and efficient manner."

And given the fact that most of the 400 fires the DAT responds to annually occur between November and March, Moar and his fellow student volunteers are certain to help many more before winter is over. +

hometown of Mastic on Long Island. He lends a hand in local soup kitchens, with Habitat for Humanity and for various community service projects through Phi Alpha Delta, the