

Harriman Award Acceptance Comments
October 26, 2016
Washington, DC

Thank you, Bonnie

It is a great honor and a pleasure to be with you this evening to accept the Harriman Award.

Let me begin by acknowledging my good friends both Bonnie Melveen-Hunter, our chair and Gail McGovern, our president and CEO. They are and continue to be a pleasure to partner with... and are wonderful leadership examples for our organization.

I could never forget my good friend, colleague, and partner in representing the ARC ... David Meltzer.... It is a pleasure to work with someone of his high caliber, common sense and good humor.

I would be remiss if I did not introduce my family members who are attending this evening.... My son Chris, my son Tim, my daughter Paris, my son in-law, Kevin Laliberte, my sister Susie and of course, the woman who is the central part of my life, Ellen Libby.

I would like to offer a couple of thoughts that many of you know, but I believe they are worth repeating:

We are the American Red Cross (not to plagiarize a movie title I like). By that I mean we are by our very mission responsible to provide aid and care when disaster strikes and be proactive to help mitigate future events before they arrive.... And they will arrive. There are other very good organizations that do things in a similar way... and America needs them all. But when you ask the average person who they think of when disaster calls, the American Red Cross is the organization that comes to mind. That “feels” good, but with it comes responsibility and that is the **responsibility of leadership**. We may not always like it, but we have the responsibility to lead when disaster calls. I believe we do that well.... And despite the occasional adverse comments, negative publicity, thoughtless nastiness, our Red Cross will be fine. ... for one reason above all else....our motive is pure and direction clear... The leadership of the American Red Cross is critical to America.

While most of us think of the American Red Cross in domestic terms, the humanitarian world sees us as a worldwide institution partnering with other Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies and NGOs to serve together when natural and man-made disasters take place. Think the tsunami, Haiti (then and now), Japanese earthquake, droughts and unrest in Africa, Syria....Oh my goodness, Syria!!!, recent floods in Latin America, 60 million displaced persons, the list goes on and on.... And this is only the visible or publicly known list.... As in America, we are expected to lead. Henry Davidson, an American Red Cross volunteer, is credited with founding the International Federation we participate in today. Our partners look to us for

leadership, working together and yes, providing resources when and where possible. Speaking of leadership, what better international example could we have than my good friend Dr. Abdul Attar. He and his colleagues work in an area of the world where much help is needed but few are willing to or can go. The point is this. We live in a global world. We cannot insulate ourselves from worldwide events that befall others because the “others” is all of us. We have a responsibility to lead ... it is what is expected of us.

Everyone in this room is connected to The Red Cross or Red Crescent in one way or another. You may be a staff member employed by the Red Cross or be a volunteer. What I have always found interesting is that you are here – meaning involved with the Red Cross – doing what you do because you care! Why else would you be here? It is not about a paycheck or a “good feeling.” It is – again – because you care! I would urge you to keep stepping forward. None of us know how long we will be able to serve. The recent tragic and unexpected loss of a husband and very valued, always ready, Red Cross volunteer in Bob Hassmiller should show all of us that you cannot wait. So don’t wait, be involved, when the opportunity presents!

Finally, a more personal word. Thank you again for this honor. It has been an interesting thirty-three-year journey. I know that I would not trade a minute of it, would not trade the lessons learned, would not trade the wonderful friendships made, and most, I would not trade the opportunity to serve with all of you..... after all..... **We are the American Red Cross.**

Thank you!