

## Local Red Cross deploys to Newtown, CT



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Posted December 19, 2012, Caroline Boardman, Albany, NY

The American Red Cross Mid-Hudson Valley Chapter deployed a volunteer to Newtown, CT this week to assist with Red Cross support efforts following the tragic school shooting on Friday.

Dr. James Halpern (of New Paltz), who is a Professor of Psychology and Counseling at SUNY New Paltz and Director of the College's Institute of Disaster Mental Health (IDMH), dispatched to Newtown on Saturday, December 15. He's been a Red Cross volunteer since 2000 and has experience with Red Cross deployment for other major events such as the 2007 Nor'easter, Pennsylvania floods of 2004, and Tropical Storm Allison (LA) in 2001.

While in Newtown, Halpern has provided emotional support and grief counseling to first responders, members of the community, family members and classmates of the victims. He has been stationed in the Family Assistance Center, was present at President Obama's visit with victim's family members, and supported the interfaith vigil at Newtown High School.

"What we, the Red Cross, supply to this community, is a gift from the American people," said Halpern. "Similar to 9/11, this tragedy once again, shattered our assumptions about the world we live in."

Halpern added that he felt honored to be there with several well-trained and highly experienced Red Cross workers helping people deal with emotional stress, and provide guidance and counsel.

The IDMH program routinely has college students working as interns at the Mid-Hudson Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross. IDMH also works with the Red Cross in Greater New York each year to provide support for the 9/11 memorial service in Manhattan.

More than 150 Red Cross volunteers have been providing food, water and emotional support for the community of Newtown at the request of local authorities.

For more information on the Red Cross assistance efforts in Newtown, CT, visit <http://www.redcross.org/news/article/Red-Cross-Helping-in-Connecticut-after-School-Shooting>.