

Proclamation 7648 of February 28, 2003**American Red Cross Month, 2003***By the President of the United States of America**A Proclamation*

Throughout our history, Americans have been committed to helping the suffering, the disadvantaged, and those in need of help. The American Red Cross represents the compassion of our Nation in action. During American Red Cross Month, we honor this remarkable organization and recognize its proud heritage of service.

For more than 121 years, the Red Cross has upheld its mission to provide relief to victims of disasters and to help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies. Last year, the Red Cross helped victims of more than 70,000 disasters, ranging from dwelling fires to widespread catastrophes such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and wildfires. Around the world, the Red Cross contributed to international efforts that aided other countries devastated by natural disasters, assisted people in getting access to safe drinking water, and battled malnutrition and life-threatening diseases. More than half a million U.S. military families received direct assistance from the Red Cross, helping them stay connected with their loved ones, despite difficult circumstances.

The American Red Cross also strengthens our communities by encouraging citizens to be involved and to help their neighbors in need. Last year, more than 1.2 million everyday heroes volunteered at their local Red Cross chapters, and almost 12 million more took the time to learn lifesaving skills such as first aid, CPR, and defibrillator use. And more than 4 million citizens answered the call for blood donors, giving 7.2 million blood donations through the American Red Cross.

During these times of great consequence, the mission of the Red Cross is more critical than ever. As our Nation confronts new challenges, the American Red Cross and its partners are working with the Federal Government and the emergency planning community to help keep America safe. Through its “Together We Prepare” campaign, the Red Cross is a vital partner with the Department of Homeland Security in empowering individuals and families to protect themselves and be prepared for the unexpected.

Countless people across our country turn to the American Red Cross every day for blood and blood products, disaster assistance, and vital community services. We are grateful for this essential and inspiring organization, and we celebrate its legacy of help, hope, and healing for those in need.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2003 as American Red Cross Month. As we celebrate this month, I call upon all citizens to become partners in preparedness with their local Red Cross chapters and to become active participants in advancing the noble mission of the American Red Cross.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Proclamation 7649 of February 28, 2003

Irish-American Heritage Month, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

From the earliest days of our Republic, America has inspired the hopes and dreams of countless individuals from around the world who have come to share in our gifts of freedom, justice, and opportunity. During Irish-American Heritage Month, we celebrate the contributions of these talented and industrious citizens and recognize their rich legacy of ingenuity, creativity, and achievement.

Throughout our history, America has welcomed millions of Irish immigrants to its shores. These proud people arrived seeking a better life for themselves, their families, and future generations. Many courageous individuals came during the terrible years of Ireland's Great Famine in the middle of the 19th century, and their road to prosperity was not easy. Many faced significant obstacles, including discrimination and poverty. Despite these challenges, Irish Americans have risen to success in every sector of our society.

Americans of Irish descent have played a vital role in shaping our history and culture. Nineteen Presidents of the United States have claimed Irish heritage. One-third to one-half of the American troops during the Revolutionary War and 9 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were Irish Americans. Irish Americans explored our frontiers, built many of our Nation's bridges, canals, and railroads, and their proud record of public service helped to fortify our democracy.

In all areas of American life, Irish Americans have made significant and enduring contributions to our great country. America is a better Nation because of the efforts of Irish Americans like Henry Ford, who spurred innovation; Bing Crosby, who entertained countless people around the world; and activist Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, who worked for critical and compassionate social reform. These individuals are just a few of the many Irish Americans who helped to transform our national identity and whose accomplishments reflect the determination, joy, and hope of the Irish. The faith, perseverance, and spirit of the Irish have helped to strengthen our families, our communities, our ideals, and our national character.

Today, approximately one in four Americans can trace their ancestry in part to Ireland's green shores, and we are proud of and grateful for the many Irish Americans who continue to enrich our country.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Con-