

# NEWS



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## **Southeastern Pennsylvania Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters Honored during National Volunteer Week, April 18-24**

Deputy Managing Director for Emergency Management MaryAnn E. Tierney and Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers honored Southeastern Pennsylvania Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (SEPA VOAD) members and other neighborhood agencies that came to the aid of residents during a five-alarm fire at the Austin Manor Apartments. The agencies were honored during National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, at the Fire Administration Building. Alex Agosti, director of preparedness for the American Red Cross, Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter and Tania Venton, SEPA VOAD Supervisor were also on hand at the Volunteer Recognition Ceremony on April 20.

During this week all over the nation, volunteers are being recognized for their commitment and dedication to service. Experience shows that government by itself cannot solve all of our social service needs. "Volunteers are essential to Philadelphia's success as a caring and compassionate city," said Deputy Managing Director Tierney. "It is only fitting that we recognize the SEPA VOAD members and the other agencies who responded to the call for help and for coordinating the recovery efforts of the families who were affected by this devastating fire. These volunteer agencies provided hope during the most trying times and their commendable efforts are an inspiration to all of us."

It was a chaotic scene when the Fire Department arrived around 4:30 a.m. on Sunday, November 20 and quickly sounded multiple alarms. It was later determined that a burning candle sparked the fire that quickly spread throughout the apartment complex, injuring 21 residents and four firefighters. "While the professionals of the PFD always respond to assist citizens in danger as a job requirement, it is those who voluntarily step up in a time of need that the Fire Department recognizes for going above and beyond the call of duty" said Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers. "We salute all volunteers for their commitment to Dedication and Service."

SEPA VOAD was called after 34 families were forced to evacuate their apartments during the fire. Over the next three months, more than 20 SEPA VOAD and other agencies “adopted” 17 of these families to assist with their recovery needs. Thanks to their efforts, all of the families have recently found new residences and are in the process of rebuilding their lives. “SEPA VOAD is an example of what a true partnership can create,” said Tom Foley, CEO of the American Red Cross Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter. “No one entity could have achieved these kinds of results alone in the wake of the Austin Manor fire. The American Red Cross is fortunate to have such committed partners in the region.” Each year, SEPA VOAD works collaboratively to provide hope and make a difference to their neighbors in need. Through its coordinated planning efforts, SEPA VOAD matches community needs with resources provided by member agencies to ensure that all clients get the help that they need.

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