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Bone-chilling temps pose danger to homeless

**SUBMITTED BY NIAGARA
GOSPEL RESCUE MISSION**

The homeless in the Niagara Region have been dealt a double-blow, said officials at Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission.

"Niagara Gospel Mission is doing everything possible to help, but we need community support to meet the most urgent needs," Executive Director Tom McLaughlin said.

He added, "COVID has been a frightening ordeal for our homeless guests and our staff and volunteers. But this onslaught of snow/wind/blisteringly cold weather has made it even worse."

According to Healthline.com, extreme cold temperatures can cause frostbite and other dangerous complications in under 30 minutes. The very old and young are in even more danger.

"Some of our homeless guests are showing signs of hypothermia, respiratory problems and more,"



McLaughlin said. "And we are dealing with folks who have inadequate clothing for this weather, and are already suffering with colds, sinus issues, heart conditions and arthritis."

McLaughlin said Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission needs donations of nonalcohol cold medications, cough drops, ibuprofen, lip balm

and lotion. "Our greatest need is for water resistant gloves, new underwear and socks, gently used coats, and other cold weather clothing. You can't imagine the suffering of someone who's wearing wet socks or surviving without a coat or gloves in this weather."

NGRM has sheltered an average 80 each night in January and

February, despite the challenges of COVID-19.

"We are helping as many as possible under the circumstances," McLaughlin said. "Community support is vital now so we can keep going."

To make a financial donation, visit www.NiagaraGRM.org, or call 205-8805. To seek help for yourself or someone you know, call the Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission's help line at the same number.

Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission is a Christ-centered 501(c)(3) private organization providing transformational services to homeless men since 2007. The agency receives no government funding and offers its services to anyone in need regardless of race, religion, lifestyle or creed.

For more information, www.NiagaraGRM.org.

Red Cross urges preparedness in winter weather

Blood and platelet donation encouraged

**SUBMITTED BY
THE AMERICAN RED CROSS**

With severe winter weather in the Western New York region, the American Red Cross encourages eligible blood and platelet donors to make an appointment to give before travel conditions become hazardous or, for those in unaffected areas, to make an appointment to give as soon as possible to help restock the blood supply.

During times of inclement weather, road conditions and power outages often result in the cancellation of blood drives and a shortfall of blood and platelet donations. The Red Cross must collect more than 2,600 platelet and nearly 13,000 blood donations every day for patients at about 2,500 hospitals and transfusion centers nationwide.

"The need for blood does not get a snow day," said Hanna Malak, Red Cross WNY regional donor services executive. "It is the blood products already on the shelves that help save lives when severe weather hits."

Eligible donors are asked to make an appointment to give blood or platelets before the approaching storm or in the days following, once it is safe to do so.

To schedule an appointment to donate, please use the American Red Cross blood donor app, visit www.RedCrossBlood.org, or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

The Red Cross is also encouraging vigilance when it comes to personal safety and staying warm. Fires linked to home heating are a leading cause of home fire deaths. Tips on winter storm safety as well as home heating safety are below. More information on emergency preparedness can be found at www.redcross.org/prepare or by downloading the Red Cross emergency app.

Cold Weather & Winter Storm Safety

- Listen to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio station or other local news channels for critical information on snowstorms and blizzards from the National Weather Service (NWS).

- Avoid driving when conditions include sleet, freezing rain, snow or dense fog.

- If travel is necessary, make sure you have an emergency kit in your vehicle that includes: a shovel, blanket, flashlight, water, snacks, first aid kit, extra batteries and a sack of sand or cat litter.

- Keep the gas tank full. A full tank will keep the fuel line from freezing.

- Before tackling strenuous tasks in cold temperatures, consider your physical condition, the weather factors, and the nature of the task.

- When shoveling snow, take frequent breaks to avoid risk of injury or cardiac arrest.

- Protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia by wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. Stay indoors, if possible.

- Bring pets inside during winter weather.

- Make sure coats, gloves or mittens, hats, boots and warm clothing are available for all household members, along with extra blankets.

- Eat regular meals and stay hydrated, but avoid caffeinated or alcoholic beverages.

Home Heating Safety

- Keep all potential sources of fuel – like paper, clothing, bedding or rugs – at least 3 feet away from space heaters, stoves or fireplaces.

- Portable heaters and fireplaces should never be left unattended. Turn off space heaters and make sure any embers in the fireplace

are extinguished before going to bed or leaving home.

- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.

- Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.

- Keep the fire in your fireplace by using a glass or metal fire screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs.

- It is critical that households have working smoke alarms and that families practice their fire escape plan.

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, visit www.redcross.org.

Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

Founded February 14, 1987

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The **Tribune** is published weekly.

Display Ads Deadline: MONDAY 5 PM

New York State Press Association, Niagara County Builders Association, Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, Wheatfield Business Association Inc., Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce, The Niagara USA Chamber.



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FRONTIER
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