American Red Cross

The Pillowcase Project

Learn. Practice. Share.

Origin

The Pillowcase Project was created by the American Red Cross in Southeast Louisiana and implemented in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Kay Wilkins, Southeast Louisiana regional executive, had learned that Loyola University students carried their valuables in pillowcases when they were evacuated for Katrina. This inspired Wilkins and her team to work with an art therapist to create a program in which children living in makeshift communities across New Orleans decorated pillowcases as emergency supplies kits. Soon, The Pillowcase Project became a preparedness education program for elementary school students, and in just a few years was adapted and implemented by several other Red Cross chapters with substantial success.

In early 2013, the Red Cross received a grant from Disney to design and develop a multiyear effort that would build on this success by creating a standardized, state-of-the-art preparedness education program. Now entering the third year of this pilot, The Pillowcase Project is being offered by every Red Cross region across the country.

Vision

The Pillowcase Project will help create a generation of children who understand the science of hazards, are empowered to take action preparing for emergencies, and are excited to help create a prepared community by sharing what they have learned with family and friends.

Learning Objectives

Students who participate in The Pillowcase Project will be able to:

- Identify the best ways to stay safe during emergencies that can occur in their communities.
- Identify the best ways to prevent and stay safe during a home fire.
- Use coping skills to help manage stress during emergencies and in everyday situations.
- Gain confidence in their abilities to be prepared for emergencies through hands-on activities.
- Use their knowledge to act as advocates for emergency preparedness in their homes and communities.
- Discuss the role science plays in emergency preparedness.
- Understand and communicate the work of the Red Cross in their communities.

Program Structure

The Pillowcase Project is:

- A 40- to 60-minute, classroom-based presentation given by Red Cross employees, volunteers and community partners.
- Targeted to 8- to 11-year olds, or the grades 3-5 audience
- Presented in schools, after-school programs, summer camps and at other youth-serving sites.
- A standardized curriculum that combines instruction with physical and small-group collaborative learning activities.
- A program that meets many performance expectations for the Common Core Math and Language Arts Standards and Next Generation Science Standards for grades 3-5.

Curriculum Components

The Pillowcase Project consists of:

- A Learn, Practice, Share framework to discuss preparedness concepts
- Emergency preparedness skills and information for a locally prominent hazard
- Home fire prevention and safety skills and information
- Age-appropriate coping skills for handling emergencies and other stressful situations
- Tools for increasing household preparedness
- A brief hazard specific quiz

Program Tools for Youth

- A *My Preparedness Workbook* for students to continue learning and preparing after the presentations
- A Disney-designed pillowcase to personalize and use as a personal preparedness kit
- A Certificate of Accomplishment

Curriculum Tools for Teachers

- Science of Safety Teaching Kit with additional lesson plans
- Three classroom posters
- Education Standards Report to match curriculum to Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards
- A copy of the students' *My Preparedness Workbook*

Monster Guard: Prepare for Emergencies

Visit redcross.org/monsterguard to download the free youth preparedness game on your iOS or Android device!

To learn more about the program in your area, become a volunteer, or schedule a presentation, please contact:

www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter

For more information or national inquiries, please visit redcross.org/prepare/location/school/preparedness-education

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