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**RED CROSS CARE TEAMS, NURSES AND MENTAL
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS HELP FAMILIES IN CRISIS RECOVER**

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Chad Buechler, an American Red Cross volunteer from Seattle, has spent the last week with a care team in Madison County, visiting those families and individuals who lost loved ones in these deadly storms.

“We’re giving people a voice, giving them small rays of light in their devastation. Recovery after a death or major injury could go both ways and to see our intervention help to get a life back, even if it’s not the life they had before, makes it all worth it,” says Chad. He encourages all those reeling from this disaster to contact the Red Cross for emotional support and health needs.

His Red Cross team, in addition to those in counties all over the state, has met with the families of every person who was killed by the tornadoes in Madison County, many of whom are injured themselves and still in the hospital. He has also met with over 25 additional individuals seriously hurt and the families that are grappling with a long recovery ahead.

The Madison County teams of Red Cross mental health professionals, nurses, and caseworkers have spent days in the hospital and out in the community with affected families. First, Chad provides emotional support, listening to families tell the unique story of a loved one or express emotion that they haven’t yet expressed, to avoid placing additional burden on their family. A Red Cross nurse and mental health professional provide instant counseling, document injuries, advocate on behalf of the family or individual at the hospital and provide financial assistance for medications needed.

In addition, Chad and his teammates connect families and patients to long-term counseling resources and use funds donated to the Red Cross to take care of funeral expenses for the families who have lost someone. And still, he says, “They are giving as much to me as I am to them. When we meet, they touch us as much as we support them. This is our mission: providing help in crisis.”

Here in North Alabama, Chad has been overwhelmed by the kindness of residents. He says it’s a chance to see how families and communities react to disaster and the strength they show for each other. “We as the Red Cross are supporting those who have lost a mother, daughter, wife and they are asking us, ‘How can we help you?’ ” added Chad.

Chad is proud to be an outlet for the heartbreak residents are experiencing and knows that quick initial contact and extensive follow-up is the key. “In addition to the long-term support, we can really help these victims work through the different avenues of recovery; we can help them get on the road. You just know that it’s the combination of emotional and practical support that really helps at the end of the day.”

For Chad, one of the most important aspects of the job is the creation of a network of support for the community. “We’re not meeting once and leaving, we’re creating a network of support for people here in the community, even after the immediate emergency needs are met,” says Chad.

“When you hear the personal stories, the individuals affect you more than seeing all the destruction combined.”