Social work student finds new purpose in disaster work

In September 2012, Michelle Sulkowski (MSW 2011, COSA) lost her job due to the Pennsylvania social services budget cuts. What seemed like a nightmare, ended up opening a door to a whole new world for her as a Social Worker--Disaster Relief work. Due to the massive impact, the Red Cross recruited mental health professionals from all over the United States to assist in the Hurricane Sandy relief efforts. “I was one of the lucky ones who was chosen to go,” she says. “My experience in the School of Social Work was beneficial for this new adventure. All of the classes that exposed me to cultural differences proved to be helpful as I met people from many places and many different backgrounds. Research and statistics came to be a reality in determining where services were delivered and where they were needed. Every skill I learned about working with people was put to the test.”

While she was lucky not to be physically stationed where the storm hit, she was able to be a part of the organizational structure that was crucial in moving forward with the Disaster Relief. It offered her the opportunity to learn a great deal about the many levels of Disaster Relief, and how it can be a fulfilling career choice for social workers.

If you’d like to find out how you can offer your services to the Red Cross in your area please visit www.redcross.org