

Fall 2011

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HOSA and MRC Team Up at the Chaska Safety Camp

In July, the Carver County MRC (MN) collaborated for the first time with the Minnesota Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) at a safety camp for elementary school students that covered emergency preparedness. The Chaska Safety Camp provides two days of safety awareness and practice sessions for more than 100 third and fourth grade children in the area. A variety of individuals offered presentations at the camp, including representatives from the local hospital, weather channels, law enforcement, and public health organizations.

Three MRC volunteers and three high school HOSA representatives provided campers with the basics for making an emergency supply kit to ensure that a household is prepared for emergencies such as severe storms, flooding, and power outages. Additionally, MRC coordinator Debra Larsen adapted a National Association of County and City Health Officials Advanced Practice Center tool called “Plan 9” into a fun board game for the kids.

Scenes from the Chaska Safety Camp.



On July 21, HOSA volunteers learned their roles and assignments after Larsen conducted pre-event introductions and a strategy meeting for MRC and HOSA volunteers. The seasoned MRC nurses taught the first session that day and turned the program over to observing HOSA students, who then taught the remaining five sessions.

“...two days of safety awareness and practice sessions for more than 100 third and fourth grade children...”

Larsen says, “The most exciting thing was watching the MRC/HOSA team work together, share challenges and successes between sessions, and agree to try best practices in each successive session. Team members stepped up to the teaching challenges and supported each other so well...I’ve never seen synergy develop so fast in a group. The blend of HOSA and MRC volunteers was a winning combination.” ★



National Notes



Dear MRC Leaders and Volunteers,

I have enjoyed meeting with so many of you during this fall's regional meetings. These meetings have given me the opportunity to hear about your experiences, successes, challenges, and needs as MRC leaders, volunteers, and partners at the local, state, and regional level. Your stories are inspiring and serve as a

great reminder of how far the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) has come since its inception in 2002.

As we are rapidly approaching the 10-year anniversary of the MRC in 2012, I urge all of you to start planning your local celebrations to commemorate this milestone. Anniversary events can highlight and showcase the tremendous impact of the MRC, and can provide the visibility to build new partnerships as well as sustaining existing partnerships that can support and expand upon the MRC mission—to engage volunteers to strengthen public health, emergency response, and community resiliency. In particular, I encourage you to engage your local schools and youth organizations, such as HOSA – Future Health Professionals, and share your passion for volunteerism, leadership, and service with our next

generation. This issue of *MRC ★ In Focus* includes a story about an MRC unit working with HOSA in their community.

I also encourage you to reflect on how you can continue to strengthen your MRC unit and to expand its capability and credibility. And, remember to share your stories of success with the MRC network, as they are great resources for your peers and key to demonstrating the value of the MRC at the local, state, and national level.

The DCVMRC has several ways for you to share your stories, including the activity reports on your MRC unit profile, the two-way “MRC Leaders” listserv, and our social media tools - MRC Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/medicalreservecorps>) and MRC Twitter (http://twitter.com/#!/MRC_OSG). We also ask you to email high-quality pictures from your events and activities to MRCCContact@hhs.gov so we can post them in our photo gallery and use them in presentations and promotional materials.

Thank you for all that you do, and I look forward to hearing about your successes in the New Year. ★

Warmest Regards,

//CAPT Rob Tosatto//

CAPT Rob Tosatto
Director
Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps

MCMRC Operates POD

Wildfires burned more than 12,000 acres beginning Labor Day weekend in three counties northwest of Houston, Texas, resulting in thousands of people being evacuated from their homes. The Texas Department of State Health Services recommended N-95 masks for people returning to clean up debris after the evacuation, and also distributed masks to county residents.

On September 9, the Montgomery County (TX) MRC (MCMRC) was tasked by the state to establish a point of dispensing (POD) site to distribute the masks. As a new, relatively small unit, the MCMRC recognized that it would be a challenge for them to staff a POD so quickly. Additionally, the unit had volunteers already involved in other wildfire relief efforts. As a result, MCMRC reached out to the Fort Bend County MRC (TX), Harris County Gateway to Care MRC (TX), and Brazoria County MRC (TX) units to augment their volunteers. The MRC opened the POD at 9:00 a.m.

on Saturday; by Sunday, it was completely volunteer-run. A total of 107 volunteers operated the POD, distributing 19,700 masks to 277 vehicles. Volunteers from neighboring units adapted their POD training to the MCMRC's plan and performed seamlessly with MCMRC volunteers. Most of the Harris County MRC volunteers had just completed the IS-100 and 700 training courses on the Saturday before being deployed to the POD on Sunday, so it was a perfect opportunity for them to get real-life experience.

MCMRC coordinator Shawn Henners says, “We absolutely would not have been able to mobilize so quickly or operate so well without the cooperation and support of our neighboring units. This partnering experience was a clear example of why the national MRC and the networking opportunities available at regional and national meetings are so important.” ★

Operation Shoebox

In remembrance of 9/11, this September, the Green River Health District MRC (KY) assembled and distributed care packages to overseas U.S. troops in an effort known as Operation Shoebox. Volunteers succeeded in collecting more than 3,700 items for the troops. MRC coordinator Margaret Hibbs says, “In doing this service project we wanted to first, find a way to honor those that had perished in the 9/11 attacks, but also to rekindle the spirit of unity and compassion that was seen on that day and for so many months afterwards. We also wanted to find a way to productively pay tribute to those who are protecting our borders today—to help provide to them some comforts, and to show them our love and support!”

For six weeks, the volunteers collected items such as large quantities of hard candy and 60 hand-written cards, as well as postage and money. Volunteers spent hours sorting and assembling the boxes and postage. The money and goodies were donated by hundreds of people from churches, an elementary school, the Ladies Auxiliary, Marine Corps League, and other groups. Operation Shoebox received publicity through the local newspaper and earned a radio spot at one of the local radio stations.

Sixty boxes were sent to troops stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. A box was also sent to an injured soldier in a California hospital who had already been sent back to the United States—he had lost his leg in the line of duty. The soldier’s grandmother told Hibbs that he was having a difficult time, and Hibbs says that she “asked if we could send him a box and I said ‘absolutely!’ We filled his box extra full and had a group of youth write him a special card.” ★



Margaret Hibbs and Tonya Barr loading the first shipment of packages.

Monmouth County Partners with School Health Council

The Monmouth County Health Department MRC (NJ) recently partnered with a local elementary school to develop a School Health Council. MRC coordinator Lisa Lee wanted the MRC unit to get involved with the National Childhood Obesity Prevention Campaign after learning that children under 10 years of age may not outlive their parents, due to their lack of activity and poor eating habits.

The Health Council’s first initiative was to work on a school birthday party policy in response to the frequency of parties that included junk food. The new policy limits parties to once a month per class and sets food guidelines to limit sugary food and drink such as soda and sweets. Rather than eliminating sweets, the policy emphasizes using child-sized portions and encouraging healthy choices. The new policy has been implemented into this fall’s school guidelines and has been well received by both students and staff.

The Health Council also hosted “Walk 2 School Wednesdays” to encourage children and parents to walk to school for six Wednesdays. Walkers were greeted with healthy snacks such as apples and entered into a prize raffle each day. During the first week, 106 out of 159 kids walked to school with their parents.

In addition, the MRC planned and conducted a Family Fitness Olympics Day on October 15, which was a great success. Seventy-four children and parents participated in eight fitness games designed and led by MRC volunteers. The event also included a mini health fair featuring healthy snacks and recipes, water, biking, blood pressure screenings, emergency preparedness information, and fitness activity stations. Photos and videos of all these events are available online on the school Web site at <http://www.farmingdaleschool.com>. For details, contact Lee at Lisa.Lee@co.monmouth.nj.us. ★



School bulletin board encouraging kids to walk to school on Wednesdays.



MRC volunteer and school nurse Lynn Barrall at the health table with a PTA President/Health Council member.

MRC Units Hit the Theaters

The release of the film *Contagion* this fall provided a great opportunity for units to promote awareness of the MRC and public health.

The Kane County MRC (IL) collaborated with the Kane County Health Department at two theaters for the health department's flu campaign, "Stop the Flu Before it Starts with You!" The campaign emphasizes the "three C's": cleaning your hands, covering your nose and mouth, and containing your illness. In addition, the MRC passed out flu preparedness handouts, hand sanitizers, MRC promotional material, and promotional items from the movie, such as a satchel containing gloves and a mask.

Kane County MRC coordinator Jennifer Jaquez described the campaign as a very effective public health opportunity. Many individuals expressed appreciation for the MRC and health department's efforts to promote and answer general questions about flu preparedness and the MRC's role during a public health emergency. Many theater patrons inquired about the MRC and expressed interest in becoming a volunteer.



The Kane County MRC volunteers at a local theater.

The Eastern Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC partnered with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Immunization Task Force, and the Douglas County Health Department at a local theater to promote *Contagion's* release in conjunction with 9/11 and Disaster Preparedness Month.

During the two-day campaign, volunteers conducted blood pressure screenings and distributed information regarding disaster preparedness, blood pressure, immunization recommendations, MRC disaster coordination, and flu strains. Partners provided information on immunizations, pandemics, and the area's emergency management and health department response. MRC coordinator Tom McMahon believes that it was a successful public outreach event and example of interagency cooperation. He noted that movie patrons "seemed to appreciate the information and the knowledge that there were agencies that would deal with these issues—or at least attempt to." ★

MRC Spotlights

Volunteers

Daisy Hite has been a volunteer with the Eastern Panhandle MRC in West Virginia since 2006. She continuously helps the unit by participating in drills, inventorying the unit's storage of medical supplies, conducting volunteer recruitment, being a member of the MRC Steering Committee, and assisting with seasonal flu vaccination clinics each year. Daisy has also taken on the role of leader of the unit's homeless outreach team, where she organizes a monthly blood pressure clinic for the community's homeless population.

Mal Smart was an already active community volunteer and member of the local board of health prior to the start of the Massachusetts Region 4A's Ashland MRC unit in 2006. He has participated in many MRC activities such as joint American Red Cross training sessions, monthly MRC meetings, and supported drills in neighboring towns within Region 4A. Mal also has helped with all of the Ashland MRC's H1N1 clinics and the annual senior flu clinic. He is described by his MRC leaders as an inspiration to fellow MRC volunteers. ★

News from NACCHO

2010 National Profile of Local Health Departments Study
NACCHO is pleased to announce the results of the *2010 National Profile of Local Health Departments (LHDs)* study. With 82 percent of LHDs having completed their surveys, the data collected by the study are the most comprehensive and accurate source of information about LHD infrastructure and practice in the United States. This high response provides the information needed to update the picture of local public health. Profile data is useful to practitioners and policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels; as well as to researchers, the media, and the public. To view the report, visit: <https://eweb.naccho.org/prd/?NA408PDF> ★

NACCHO Resources

A Brief History of the Medical Reserve Corps

After the life-altering events of 9/11, volunteer physicians recognized the need for an organized group of medical volunteers who would be trained and prepared to provide supplemental medical and public health support in response to emergency operations in New York City. The group submitted a proposal to the city, requesting that a cadre of trained medical volunteers be established; the proposal was expanded to suggest that a nationwide group of volunteers be developed—a concept that eventually reached President George W. Bush and Congress. To view this issue brief, visit: <https://eweb.naccho.org/prd/?NA409PDF> ★

The Patriot Exercise

Wisconsin-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team (WI-1 DMAT) volunteers participated in a domestic preparedness exercise at the Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center in western Wisconsin in mid-July. Known as the "Patriot Exercise," it is one of the largest annual National Guard and military reserve exercises.

WI-1 DMAT includes members from both the Southeast Wisconsin MRC and Wisconsin Disaster Medical Response Team MRC, and is part of the MRC's sister agency in the National Disaster Medical System, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. WI-1 DMAT participates in a statewide partnership with Wisconsin's Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP) program and state MRC units. WI-1 DMAT, Wisconsin MRC units, and the state ESAR-VHP programs collaborate to build a layered response capability for emergency events.

Civilian and military personnel from several states collaborate during the Patriot Exercise to develop best practices and refine emergency responses and coordination to a variety of potential terrorist events such as train accidents and exposure from hazardous material spills. The WI-1 DMAT members integrated with the 178th Medical Group of the Ohio Air National Guard and staffed an Expeditionary Medical Support Basic layout, which is an Air Force medical field facility designed to receive, assess, and stabilize patients. The DMAT and 178th Medical Group worked alongside one another practicing triage and patient evaluation, simulated emergency and surgical care, command and control, and patient and personnel tracking.

Pat Adams, a volunteer with the WI-1 DMAT and Southeast Wisconsin MRC says, "It was a great learning exercise in group integration. As it was the first time our DMAT team worked together, I must say I was pleasantly surprised that all members worked well with each other and clicked."

WI-1 DMAT members gained experience in handling mass casualty triage, streamlining patient flow and medical care, as well as receiving hands-on education in the evacuation of patients on military fixed-wing and rotary aircraft.

WI-1 DMAT/Wisconsin Disaster Medical Response Team MRC coordinator Shawn Metzner says, "This was an excellent opportunity to see how a military hospital and medical evacuation system work in conjunction with each other. Some of the MRC programs in the state are in the planning stages of offering alternate care sites or field clinics to the communities they serve after a disaster. It was great to see how these plans will work off paper." ★



Gary Rowland and Shawn Metzner conduct "immediate" care during the exercise.



MRC volunteer Pat Adams prepares for training on helicopter patient evacuation.

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Nashville, Tennessee

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<http://www.integratedtrainingsummit.org/>



Florida Keys and Mobile MRC Collaborate on Exercise

On June 21, the Florida Keys MRC (FL) and the Mobile MRC (AL) collaborated for a regional Alternate Care Site (ACS) exercise, which included a scenario for a large-scale commercial vessel disaster. The exercise also included a blocked road to the mainland, requiring the setup of an ACS, which is a common scenario in the 135-mile stretch of islands off the Florida coast. Mirine Dye, MPH, leader of the Florida Keys MRC and Elizabeth Williams, MPH, leader of the Mobile MRC, met at a leadership session during the 2011 Integrated Training Summit, which led to their participation in the exercise.

The 8-hour exercise was held in Marathon, Florida, at the emergency operations center. It included an education session, an overview of regional capabilities, the exercise of ACS establishment, operation, demobilization, and group reporting. Dye and Williams attended and simultaneously tested the ServFL.com notification system by activating the Florida Keys MRC with an additional 16 physicians, physician assistants, and nurses. Other participating partners included the Monroe County Health Department, which was the lead agency, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard and Key West Naval Air Station. Unit activation was explained to partner agencies that were not familiar with the MRC's deployment procedures, providing the MRC with an opportunity to highlight their training, skills, and potential impact on the community during a disaster.

MRC volunteers in the closest region were activated during the exercise to test response time. Although the volunteers did not have to respond to a functional exercise, this allowed the unit to test its system and volunteers' capabilities for activation and deployment. Dye says, "The response went well with 16 medical staff being deployed to the incident site in 2 hours."

Williams noted the similarities between the Florida and Alabama coastal communities and said that she felt the knowledge gained from participating in and observing the exercise would benefit the Mobile MRC's training plans. ★

MRC leaders Elizabeth Williams and Mirine Dye at the joint exercise.



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Apache County MRC Assists with Wildfire Effort

The Wallow Fire, the largest recorded wildfire in Arizona history, started on May 29, and covered 15,407 acres in the state of New Mexico, affecting Native American reservations as well as several counties in Arizona. When the fire was finally contained on July 8, it had burned 538,049 total acres.

MRC and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) volunteers from the Apache County (AZ) CERT/MRC teams were asked to assist at the Joint Information Center (JIC), activated on June 2. The JIC includes the 593 Joint Information Systems, which consists of a Web site and telephone call centers. The JIC Web site provides answers to the public and is a single source of information for partner agencies. The hotline provides residents with information regarding evacuations, sheltering in place, and what actions to take in an emergency.

As the Wallow Fire increased in size, so did the need for volunteers in the call center, which remained open for 22 consecutive days after it was activated. The call center was operated in two shifts per day, using 85 volunteers. A total of 8,565 incoming calls were received from the public.

Apache County Public Health Services District unit coordinator Jean Wilson says, "When the residents call in, they speak with a trained volunteer with up-to-date information from the command staff, emergency management, and outside agencies." ★

MRC-TRAIN as a Discussion and Resource Repository

In addition to providing unit leaders with an opportunity to track volunteer training and education through an integrated Web-based system, MRC-TRAIN allows for the creation and maintenance of discussion boards and resource repositories.

Discussion Boards, accessed through the navigation bar located at the top of each MRC-TRAIN page, offer a forum for a variety of topics. Unit leaders can set up discussion boards to be accessible only to their unit or request that the MRC-TRAIN Help Desk set up discussion boards that span across units, states, regions, or the entire country. Within a discussion board, any participating volunteer can post new ideas and comments and reply to existing topics.

Resources, also accessed through the navigation bar, allow unit leaders to upload and share documents, training presentations, and report templates. Resource folders can be restricted to individual units or set up for sharing across unit lines. The resources section is a great location for a one-stop-shop repository of MRC-TRAIN materials.

Additional MRC-TRAIN resources are available at:

MRC Web site

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/searchFldr/search?subSearch=TRAINResources>

MRC-TRAIN Web site

<https://www.mrc.train.org>

The MRC-TRAIN Support Desk (mrcsupport@train.org) is available to provide assistance and field questions.

**Remember, MRC-TRAIN is FREE
(including many CEUs),
available 24/7, and on track!**

★ ★ ★ A Look Ahead ★ ★ ★

December

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

4–10 National Handwashing
Awareness Week

1 World AIDS Day

January

Cervical Health Awareness Month

National Birth Defects Prevention Month

8–14 National Folic Acid
Awareness Week

February

Heart Month

National Children's Dental Health Month

14 National Donor Day

21–24 2012 Public Health Preparedness
Summit, Anaheim, CA

<http://www.phprep.org/2012>



We want to hear from you!

We need your help to make this newsletter informative, interesting, and beneficial to MRC units nationwide. We are always accepting stories and best practices on the MRC. As a reminder, stories with photos are more likely to be included. We look forward to your submissions.

Topic Request for the Next Newsletter:

Stories on activities you've done to improve your MRC unit's operations from recruitment events to public health promotion to strategic planning, etc. *Please submit stories and photos by December 30, 2011 for consideration to mrcnewsletter@naccho.org.*

Submittal Guidelines

- Please include contact information (e-mail and telephone number) for follow-up.
- If you include photos, please send as a high-resolution JPEG, TIF, or EPS attachment.
- Digital cameras should be set for a high-quality image using the maximum megapixel setting available.
- Photo submissions also should include a caption or description of the event.

