

Spring 2009

This Issue:

- ★ Critical Emergency Response
- ★ National Notes
- ★ Local MRC Unit Reacts to H1N1
- ★ Everything is Bigger in Texas
- ★ Unit Focus – Kauai Junior MRC Unit
- ★ Save the Date: NACCHO Annual 2009 Conference
- ★ Unit Focus – Chesapeake MRC Unit
- ★ Unit Focus – ColoradoSTAR MRC Unit
- ★ News from NACCHO
- ★ MRC-TRAIN
- ★ An MOU Between the ARC and OCVMRC
- ★ Unit Focus – Calcasieu MRC Unit
- ★ New Resources
- ★ MRC Recognition Awards Announced
- ★ A Look Ahead

Critical Emergency Response to Special Needs Populations and Shelters

There has been an increase among MRC units that have been tasked with the responsibility of working with a special needs population or shelter, with little to no guidance. The units mentioned in this article faced the reality of aiding the special needs population as either an exercise or real-life scenario. Many challenges were addressed, and lessons learned from these complex emergency situations.

Whitley County (KY) MRC Unit
During January and February 2009, Debra Brown McNaughton and the MRC unit of Whitley County (KY) were deployed in response to a violent ice storm, the worst natural disaster in Kentucky's history. Whitley County MRC volunteers were sent to various special needs shelters in both Grayson and Hardin counties; the shelters accommodated about 500 patients.

Many post-surgery patients were transferred to the shelters, as hospitals were turning people away due to power outages. The challenges the MRC unit faced in the special needs shelters included the lack of electricity and post-surgery guidelines. McNaughton noted, "There should be a policy that is drafted as soon as possible for surgery patients in special needs shelters."

McNaughton mentioned that the unit received many "thank yous" from patients and the unit's training

had infinitely paid off. McNaughton says this type of emergency was a first-time experience for her unit and "everyone came back happy, because they were able to help somebody."

Brazoria County (TX) MRC Unit
In January 2009, Brazoria County (TX) unit coordinator, Bill Ray, and his unit distributed more than 150 Emergency Alert Radios and preparedness information to special needs registrants in the Brazoria County area as a preparedness activity. The Emergency Alert Radios are broadcasted by the National Weather Service, which provides emergency information such as imminent hazards and evacuation orders.

"Texas sponsors a special needs registry known as 2-1-1."

"Texas sponsors a special needs registry known as 2-1-1. Anyone who needs help can call 2-1-1 in advance and register. The information is then passed down to the local level. To identify recipients (of the radios), we used the information and data collected during Hurricane Ike through the special needs registry," says Ray.

Ray says, "As a result of this exercise, we were able to plan for other events where the distribution of commodities or medication to the homebound may be needed. The biggest success is that we now have 150 families who are better prepared for the next event and volunteers who are better prepared to respond. And, we had fun doing it!" ★

Supplies at the Grayson County special needs shelter.



An MRC member delivered an Emergency Alert Radio to a resident in Brazoria County.



Evidence of the violent ice storm that struck Kentucky.



National Notes



Dear MRC Leaders,

The Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) strives to recognize members of the growing MRC network on a regular basis, through spotlights on the MRC Web site; articles in MRC newsletters; mentions in weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports; and in presentations to national audiences. Recognizing the

work you do is of the utmost importance to us, and we want to give MRC units, volunteers, and their partners the credit they deserve. Senior leaders from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the White House, and other Federal agencies (as well as our non-governmental partners) are interested in knowing what MRC units and members are doing.

Earlier this year, the OCVMRC announced its first national-level awards. The award categories include the Community Resiliency Award, Ambassador Award, Outstanding MRC Responder Award, Outstanding Public Health Volunteer Award, Outstanding MRC Housing Organization Award, and Outstanding MRC Partner Organization Award. We had a great response to the call for nominations—more than 50 nominations were received. Following review of the nominations, two recipients were selected to receive each award. The recipients were announced at the 2009 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Conference in Dallas, Texas.

We have highlighted a different partner organization, unit, and volunteer on the MRC Web site (<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/Spotlights>) and in this newsletter each quarter. This has allowed us to share personal and success stories from around the country.

Additionally, we enjoy pulling information from the “Recent Activities” section of your profiles on the MRC Web site. These latest and greatest unit stories are used in weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports shared with the Surgeon General and other leaders within and outside of HHS. The updates that you provide are also highlighted in national newsletters, *MRC★In Focus* (print) and *MRC★In Touch* (electronic), and newsletters developed by Regional Coordinators. Keep your unit profiles up-to-date, and we will try to provide high-level recognition. To update your unit profile, go to: <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/MemberResources/UpdateUnitInformation>.

Your experiences illustrate the greatest strength of the program—its people—and the impact that they are having across the nation! One of the best parts of my job is to tell your stories to my colleagues. I always look forward to hearing about and reporting on your ongoing efforts with the Medical Reserve Corps. ★

Warmest regards,

/CAPT Rob Tosatto/

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

Local MRC Unit Reacts to the H1N1 Flu Pandemic

As cases of the 2009 H1N1 flu developed nationwide, local MRC units maintained situational awareness regarding the H1N1 flu outbreak, and several units were put on standby and alert status. This event encouraged MRC units to review their pandemic response plans with their local public health, medical, and emergency response partners.



Penny Davey, Dana Bricca, and Christine Erlach of the Marin (CA) MRC unit coordinate the results of possible exposed clients to the H1N1 flu.

The events surrounding the 2009 H1N1 flu have provided MRC units with the perfect opportunity to

assess their training and planning surrounding influenza outbreaks. Brian Waterbury and the Marin MRC unit (CA) assisted with the activation and logistical support of the local EOC to plan for A-H1N1.

Waterbury contacted the unit using the Disaster Healthcare Volunteer of California Alerting System (ESAR-VHP program). Volunteers then facilitated with the Department Operations Center (DOC) setup, DOC logistical support, and public “hotline” training and staffing. In addition, the unit provided mental health support for DOC staff and served as telephone hotline operators and field intelligence gatherers. Support was also given through IT, administrative, county laboratory, and augment clinic and hospital staffing. ★

Everything is Bigger in Texas, Including the 2009 Integrated Training Summit

Everything is bigger in Texas, including the the 2009 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit held April 4–8, 2009, in Dallas, Texas at the Hilton Anatole Hotel. More than 3,000 attendees gathered to learn about emergency preparedness, the integration of various preparedness stakeholders, and new ways to work together to achieve the goal of a safe, healthy, and better prepared nation.

The purpose of the conference was to integrate various stakeholders in the field of emergency preparedness to interact and share lessons learned and enhance the knowledge, skills, and competencies in the field. The Summit was a collaborative effort of several program offices within the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Office of Force Readiness and Deployment, Office of Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, National Disaster Medical System, and the Emergency System for Advance Registration of

Volunteer Health Professionals. These offices share a common goal: to become more united and prepared to organize a flawless medical and public health response during a disaster.

From poster displays to interactive sessions and networking events, the Summit provided attendees numerous options to benefit their careers in the field of emergency preparedness. Subject matter experts from federal, state, and local government agencies and representatives of the private sector and academic institutions presented at the summit.

During the closing ceremony on April 8, 2009, CAPT Tosatto concluded saying, “We have seen the integration we’ve been hoping for.” CAPT Tosatto also announced next year’s Integrated Training Summit will be held in Nashville, Tennessee. ★

Unit Focus – Kauai Junior MRC Unit: Bridging the Generation Gap

The Kauai Junior MRC unit was the first junior MRC unit established in Hawaii. The unit consists of about 75 members, 14 of whom are junior members. During January and February 2009, the unit offered orientation and training in ICS 100 and MRC Core Competencies to its junior members.

In addition, the junior MRC members benefit from an informal mentor program provided by the unit. During each quarterly meeting, junior members are matched up with professionals in their “chosen” profession. This provides the younger members the opportunity to learn from their mentor’s professional experiences.

MRC unit leader Mojisola Owolabi is proud of the progress the unit has made and looks forward to future trainings to integrate both the junior and senior members of the unit. She also mentioned that Fran Becker of Na Lei Wili Area Health Education Center, Inc. is a partner organization and co-leader who helped Owolabi attain a junior MRC unit. ★



SAVE the DATE!

NACCHO Annual 2009 Conference

*The New Public Health: Working
Across Sectors to Leverage Investment
in Communities*

**July 29–31, 2009 • Orlando, Florida
Rosen Shingle Creek Resort**

The goal of this conference is to enhance the ability of participants to create “the new public health,” which will result in measurably improved health outcomes and health benefits and a return on the public’s investment in the health of communities. For more information, visit:

[http://www.naccho.org/events/
nacchoannual2009/](http://www.naccho.org/events/nacchoannual2009/)



Photo Credit: Rosen Shingle Creek

Unit Focus – Chesapeake MRC Unit Champions Mass Influenza Prevention Campaign

Addressing the spread of germs in schools is essential to the health of school-aged youth nationwide. Becky Washburn, MRC unit coordinator of Chesapeake (VA), established a partnership with about 60 local school nurses and health services staff to launch an influenza prevention campaign to tackle the spread of germs in schools.

During January 2009, Mary Doris Ferguson, RN (MRC member), Washburn, and Barbara Robinson, RN, supervisor of health services, presented a new coughing and sneezing etiquette entitled, “Cover Our Cough and Sneeze with Our Sleeves” at a staff in-service seminar. The positive feedback from this presentation encouraged the two leaders to launch an influenza prevention campaign. “The campaign raised awareness about flu prevention and the partnership between the Chesapeake public schools and the Chesapeake MRC unit,” says Washburn.

Grassfield High School was extremely appreciative of the influenza prevention campaign, and the school’s nurse, Cheryl Larmon, RN (Chesapeake MRC volunteer), presented the educational materials to Suzanne Murden, MS Ed., and Robert Ulsh’s class. The students were very excited about and thankful for the flu prevention methods. “The result of the partnership between the Chesapeake MRC unit and local nurses has forged stronger relationships and has provided extensive public health outreach, education, and resources to the Chesapeake area,” says Washburn. ★



Chesapeake Public School Nurses and Health Services staff.



Chesapeake MRC volunteer and school nurse, Cheryl Larmon, RN, with Suzanne Murden’s class of Grassfield High School.

Photo Credit: Suzanne Murden, MS Ed.

Unit Focus – ColoradoSTAR MRC Unit is a “Life Saver”

The ColoradoSTAR (Special Tactics and Rescue) MRC unit is unique, with a small, elite group of volunteers who have expertise in both emergency medicine and law enforcement. This unit has the capability to offer support services and rescue to first responders, including the recovery of responders in hostile conditions.

ColoradoSTAR also provides assistance to local agencies by teaching courses and exercises, such as the “Life Saver” course. The course educates first responders, law enforcement personnel, and school teachers about the emergency medical skills necessary to treat penetrating traumatic injuries that could cause life-threatening bleeding until professional EMS can arrive on the scene.

To prepare for the “Life Saver” class, members of the ColoradoSTAR team attended “Train the Trainer” and Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) classes. The TCCC class follows a military model of care with a special focus of care under fire and the use of evidence-based tactics that allow for the best possible mission outcome. The unit is also trying to expand its training efforts through grants and strategic relationships with local and federal law enforcement agencies, in addition to primary care hospitals.

ColoradoSTAR Team Commander, Daniel Nye, says that the mission of the team is to “improve the resiliency of the entities that we serve by providing a force multiplier that enhances [their] operational outcomes. In these uncertain and difficult times, it’s critical that volunteer groups, healthcare agencies, law enforcement agencies, and EMS first responders identify and provide mitigation of the gaps that exist in public services and find new methods to work cooperatively.” ★



ColoradoSTAR members at a tactical medical class.



ColoradoSTAR tent at the U.S. National SWAT competition.

News from NACCHO: Sneak Preview of *Case Studies of the MRC Program Collaboration with Local Health Departments*

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) collaborated with the MRC to discover how local health departments (LHDs) and MRC units use MRC volunteers in mutually beneficial ways. The impact of this dynamic relationship is examined in the report *Case Studies of the MRC Program Collaboration with Local Health Departments*.

The report is based on interviews with 18 LHD and MRC leaders conducted during the summer of 2008. It reflects “Notes from the Field,” which describes the varying experiences that leaders have encountered while working with one another. Also included in the report are activities described by MRC leaders, information about how MRC leaders have collaborated with LHDs, recommendations, and more.

This report can be found on the NACCHO Web site at: <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/resources/reports.cfm>. ★

MRC-TRAIN: Get Your Volunteers Aboard!

The MRC-TRAIN learning management system serves as a repository for national and local Web and classroom-based education, the tracking and management of volunteer education, and the ability to personalize information that your volunteers have access to.

Under the *Users* menu item, there is a section called *Upload Users*. MRC leaders can download the template provided and fill in the required fields (*login, last name, first name, e-mail, organization, address, and ZIP Code*). After the completed template is uploaded, MRC-TRAIN creates accounts for volunteers and provides MRC leaders with the option to send an e-mail to volunteers informing them of their new account.

MRC leaders are strongly encouraged to first review the **Batch Registration: User Upload Guidelines** for clear instructions and to avoid creating duplicate accounts in the system.

The MRC-TRAIN Support Desk (mrcsupport@train.org), the MRC Web site (<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/TRAINResources>), and MRC-TRAIN (<https://www.mrc.train.org>) provide MRC leaders with an invaluable toolbox regarding training and tracking volunteers. Remember, MRC-TRAIN is *free* (including many CEUs), available 24/7, and on track! ★

An MOU Between the ARC and the OCVMRC

On April 2, 2009, the American Red Cross (ARC) and the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to coordinate planning, preparation, and response efforts. The relationship between both organizations paves the way for communities to create complementary plans, trainings, and efforts between local Red Cross chapters and MRC units.

The ARC mission and vision is parallel to the OCVMRC. As a result, the leadership of both entities have had several meetings and reached an understanding of how both organizations can work together effectively and how the partnership may evolve in the future.

The growing partnership between the ARC and the OCVMRC was initiated by successful joint responses to disasters by the ARC and MRC units in the past. The partnership has helped to make communities healthier, safer, and better prepared.

To view and download a printer-friendly version of the MOU between the OCVMRC and ARC, visit: <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/JointMemoTemplate/ARCMRCJointMemo>.

Basically, there are three ways for ARC and MRC volunteers to work together:

1. MRC Volunteers working as ARC Volunteers
2. MRC Volunteers working alongside ARC Volunteers (i.e., in shelters, emergency aid stations, etc.)
3. ARC Volunteers working as MRC Volunteers

To help foster relationships between ARC chapters and MRC units, the OCVMRC and ARC have created an MOU template. To download the template, visit: <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/JointMemoTemplate>. ★



CAPT Tosatto and Joe Decker sign the MOU between the MRC and ARC. Pictured: Front Row (L-R): Joe Decker, CAPT Rob Tosatto; Back Row (L-R): Lynn Crabb, Rob Yin, April Wood, Kelly Johnson, CDR Brad Austin, Jeanne Spears, Jack Herrmann.

Unit Focus – Calcasieu MRC Unit Travels to “Safety Town”

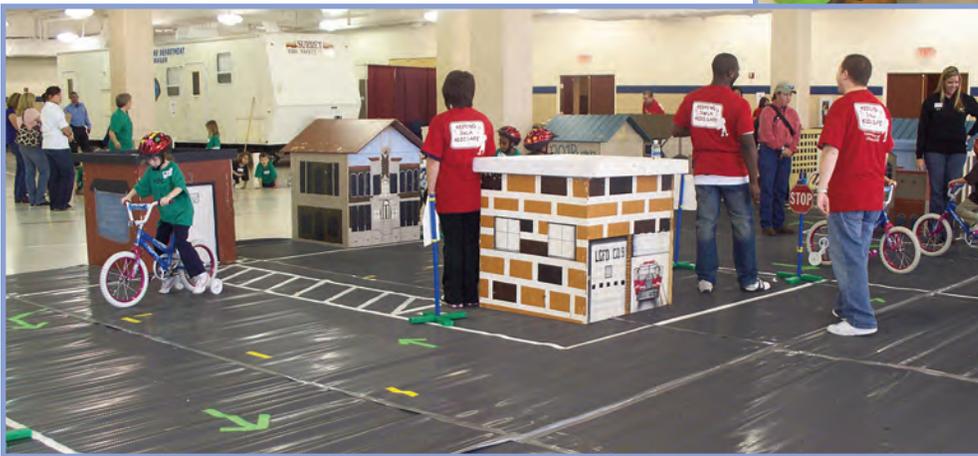
In February 2009, about 50 members of the Calcasieu MRC (LA) provided public health services to more than 500 students in pre-kindergarten to first-grade at the local “Safety Town” event, which lasted 4 days at the Lake Charles Civic Center in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

Safety Town included volunteers from the Calcasieu MRC unit, local police, fire departments, and other agencies. The event featured many different activities for MRC volunteers to partake in, including the examination of the general health of students. Volunteers took the weight and blood pressure of students, calculated their body mass index (BMI) and put this information into an envelope for the students to take home to their parents.

Unit coordinator, Angela Jouett says, “The Safety Town event was so successful that we decided to do a partial event one month later for National Black Heritage Day...my volunteers really enjoyed these events, especially the nursing students from local McNeese State University. This gave them such a real hands-on experience.” ★



Firefighters taught children how to safely evacuate a home.



Students practiced riding their bikes, with their helmets on, around the course.

New Resources: NACCHO

Is your agency prepared to receive the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS)? STOCKbox is an online source of SNS-related tools and resources developed and shared by SNS preparedness planners. If your jurisdiction has developed a tool that has been useful in your SNS planning and implementation efforts and you are willing to share it with your public health colleagues, send an e-mail to got_tools@naccho.org.

Used a tool that you found in STOCKbox? Rate it! Access the STOCKbox Toolkit at: http://www.naccho.org/toolbox/program.cfm?id=6&display_name=STOCKbox. ★



First Annual MRC Recognition Awards Announced

During the 2009 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit in Dallas, Texas, the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) held an Awards and Recognition Ceremony in honor of outstanding Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units and volunteers.

More than 50 nominations were submitted for various awards. After an extensive review by the OCVMRC Awards Review Panel, only two recipients were selected for each category.

The following awards were given:

Community Resiliency Award

- MRC GEM unit, Georgia—Sherwin Levinson, unit coordinator, accepted this award.
- Marin MRC unit, California—Brian Waterbury, unit coordinator, accepted this award.

Ambassador Award

- Project H.E.L.P. USA MRC unit, Alabama—Dr. Thomas Ellison, project coordinator, accepted this award.
- Virginia Beach MRC unit, Virginia—Jennifer Freeland, state coordinator, accepted this award.

Outstanding MRC Responder Award

- Paula Drake, volunteer of the Snohomish County MRC unit, Washington.
- Diana Walker-Moyer, volunteer of the Upper Merrimack Valley MRC unit, Massachusetts.

Outstanding MRC Public Health Volunteer Award

- Lida Craft, volunteer of the Montgomery County MRC unit, Kentucky.
- Jeanne Morries, volunteer of the Maui County Health Volunteers, Hawaii.

Outstanding MRC Housing Organization Award

- Fairfax County Health Department, Virginia—Dianne Quebral, unit coordinator of the Fairfax MRC, accepted this award on behalf of the Health Department.
- San Bernardino Medical Society and the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department in California—Brenda Brennan of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's MRC accepted the award on behalf of the Medical Society and Sheriff's Department.

Outstanding MRC Partner Organization Award

- Washington Service Corps of Washington—Scott Carlson, Washington state MRC coordinator; Annie Merritt, unit coordinator; Diana Yu, unit director; and Jennifer Burns, volunteer of the Washington Region 3 MRC unit, accepted this award on behalf of the Washington Service Corps.
- American Red Cross, Mid-Rio Grande Chapter of New Mexico—Scott Snyder, Emergency Services Director of the American Red Cross, Mid-Rio Grande Chapter accepted this award.

The OCVMRC would also like to thank this year's OCVMRC Awards Review Panel, which included the following people:

- LTJG Shakirat Apelogun, OCVMRC
- Gary Brown, OCVMRC, Region VII
- Becki Chester, NACCHO
- Karen Matsuda, Department of Health and Human Services, Region X
- Ilya Plotkin, Public Health Foundation
- Samuel Schaffzin, OCVMRC



★ ★ ★ ★ A Look Ahead ★ ★ ★ ★

June

National Safety Month

14 World Blood Donor Day

27 National HIV Testing Day

July

UV Safety Month

5–11 Therapeutic Recreation Week

August

National Immunization Awareness Month

9–15 National Health Center Week



We Want to Hear from You!

We need your help to make this newsletter informative, interesting, and beneficial to MRC units nationwide. Share news, ideas, interesting stories, and best practices, or tell us about outstanding volunteers.

Submittal Guidelines:

- Please include contact information (e-mail and telephone number) for followup.
- 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.

E-mail us at: MRCnewsletter@naccho.org



MRC ★ In Focus

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

Volume 3, Issue 2

www.medicalreservecorps.gov



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And More...



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