



# MRC ★ In Touch

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## Featured Article

### Virginia Beach MRC Helps Homeless Community with Public Health Outreach Activities

The Virginia Beach MRC (VBMRC) recently partnered with the city of Virginia Beach's Projects in the Assistance for Transition from Homeless (PATH) program to provide ongoing basic first aid training to the homeless community of Virginia Beach. Some of the homeless reside in tents in the woods nearby the resort area and may not have immediate access to healthcare. Therefore, the VBMRC thought this would be a good outreach opportunity to educate this population so that they understand basic first aid and information.

#### First Aid Classes

Approximately 25 individuals from the homeless community attend weekly meetings to learn first aid. MRC volunteer, Bob Leavenworth, has taught some of the classes. The classes are held at a location owned by a local church called "the Potter's House," which is specifically used for supporting the oceanfront homeless community.

During the first aid training classes, individuals are taught practical applications on how to deal with first aid issues, what to do, and what not to do. Bob teaches concepts including overall safety, scene survey, how to deal with severe respiratory issues, bleeding issues, falls, animal bites, and much more.

Some of the biggest challenges the volunteers have encountered so far are questions from individuals who suffer from drug use and mental health issues about suicide attempts, shooting and stabbing issues, and other major real-world issues the homeless population has to deal with because of the circumstances they live in. These topics address a realm of issues that are beyond what a basic first aid level class offers. Unit director, Jolynn Turner says Leavenworth has been phenomenal in dealing with these types of questions and always emphasizes to the class, to not be the "hero" and to not be afraid to call for help if it is beyond the comfort level of basic first aid.

#### History of the VBMRC's Partnership with PATH

The partnership with PATH began in 2006 when the VBMRC provided public health services such as flu shots to the homeless during I-Count, PATH's annual sample homeless population count. I-Count supports individuals that have substance use disorders, serious mental illnesses, and individuals who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless.

In addition, during the H1N1 pandemic, the VBMRC collaborated with PATH and provided 82 flu shots to the homeless community in 2009–2010. The MRC volunteers functioned as vaccinators, health screeners, and took the blood pressure of individuals, and helped individuals fill out applications for birth certificates so they can obtain additional services. Through these events, volunteers identified several people with hypertension after blood pressure screenings, and had the PATH program follow-up with their care.

So far, 28 homeless individuals have been vaccinated this season and a large amount of individuals are expected to be vaccinated in January 2011 at I-Count.

### **Final Thoughts**

The VBMRC participates in these events because the efforts of the volunteers, "makes a direct impact in our community while providing additional volunteer engagement opportunities. It also makes our MRC unit unique in its public health outreach initiatives that it takes on," says unit director, Jolynn Turner.

Turner says it has been an "amazing experience getting to know this group of individuals over the past several years. The VBMRC has continued to build a trusting relationship with the homeless community with our outreach efforts, so much that they now call me the 'flu shot lady' and MRC volunteers 'the people with the red shirts.' The VBMRC looks forward to providing additional public health community outreach opportunities and services to the Virginia Beach homeless population by continuing to work with partners such as PATH and our local churches."

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## **MRC/NACCHO Connections**

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### **NACCHO Releases New Report to Guide the Future of Local Chronic Disease Prevention**

*The Roadmap for Chronic Disease Prevention*, provides guidance to local health departments (LHDs) on how to build the capacity needed to implement population-based strategies to prevent chronic disease irrespective of a LHD's staffing level, legal authority, or population size. The report outlines key functions of LHDs to effectively address population-based chronic disease prevention,

examples of activities in each of these functions, and guidance on staffing capacity needed based on jurisdiction size.

A free PDF of Roadmap is available for free through the Publications library. Hard copies of the publication will also soon be available for ordering through the Publications library. To order either version you need to login with your NACCHO username and password or select New Visitor Registration to create a new account for free. Please click the link below. \_

<http://www.naccho.org/NA381PDF.pdf>

## Announcements



### **2011 Integrated Training Summit Abstracts for Poster Submissions**

The 2011 Integrated Training Summit Planning Committee is accepting poster presentations to be considered for the 2011 Integrated Training Summit that will be held in Grapevine, Texas from May 1-5, 2011. The deadline to submit abstracts for poster presentations is Tuesday, February 1, 2011.

For more information, please visit <http://teams.hhs.gov/conference/>.

### **Register Today for the 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit**

The 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit will be held in Atlanta, February 22-25, 2011. Register early to save money for the 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit at <http://www.phprep.org/2011/register/>.

To learn more about why you should attend the 2011 Summit, visit <http://www.phprep.org>.

### **MRC Lessons Learned and Experience Sharing**

"MRC lessons learned and experience sharing" is a way for MRC units to share their practices, examples, and success stories. It is designed to highlight the challenges and successes of MRC units' involvement with emergency preparedness, response, and public health activities; therefore, MRC units and their leaders can learn from one another. \_

<http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/resources/mrcshare.cfm>

To submit information for either MRC: In Touch or MRC: In Focus, please contact Megan Skupien at [mskupien@naccho.org](mailto:mskupien@naccho.org) or (202)783-1376.



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