



# MRC ★ In Touch

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## Featured Articles

### Hilltown MRC/HEART Responds to October's "Winter" Storm

During the rare October 29th snowstorm, the Hampshire Emergency Animal Response Team (HEART), a sub-group of the Hilltown MRC (MA), received a volunteer deployment request from the health director of the city of Northampton. Volunteers were asked to deploy to a regional shelter and co-located animal shelter opened by the city and the American Red Cross (ARC).

Within an hour and a half of receiving the deployment request, both HEART volunteers and members of Berkshire Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) deployed to the animal co-shelter, located at a local high school. The shelter was staffed by American Red Cross personnel, MRC volunteers, and kitchen and facility managers from the school. A total of eight HEART volunteers and two Berkshire DART volunteers staffed the animal shelter.

The volunteers worked 12-hour shifts for five days at the animal shelter, providing administrative and sheltering functions to the 40 animals staying at the shelter, including medical oversight of a veterinarian HEART volunteer.

In addition, Michael Nelson, County Coordinator of the Western Massachusetts MRC, organized 20 volunteers from other Hampshire County MRC units. These volunteers provided medical support at the regional shelter along with ARC personnel, and kitchen and facility managers from the school.

Larry Holmberg, Director of the Hilltown MRC/HEART says, "The snowstorm was the third multi-day deployment for the team in the last six months and each incident has provided needed practical experience for our members. A key point in companion animal sheltering is that our clients are both human and animal. Disasters are stressful for both groups and being able to be together lowers the stress level for each, which also eases the stress for shelter staff. Our experience also shows that people were reluctant to evacuate without their pets, which could have put their health and life in jeopardy."

## **Project Connect**

On September 24, 120 Deschutes County Public Health Reserve Corps (DCPHRC), Oregon Emergency System for the Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP) volunteers, and 16 AmeriCorps VISTA members participated in Project Connect (PC) in Redmond, Oregon to honor the victims of 9/11. For two years, the DCPHRC has helped serve and carry out the mission of Project Connect, which is to “rally our region to support and create lasting solutions for those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness here in Central Oregon. Project Connect is a component of Central Oregon’s regional 10 year Strategy to End Homelessness,” says State MRC Coordinator, Akiko Berkman.

At PC, two VISTA members acted as American Sign Language interpreters and as a Spanish-English interpreter. Other volunteers registered patients at check-in, provided dental intake and exit interviews, took photos, and produced official copies of birth certificates for guests. The MRC and ESAR-VHP volunteers were deployed as if it was a real mass casualty event and were alerted, registered, pre-verified, confirmed, and went through a check-in and demobilization process. All volunteers worked under the Incident Command System.

“This event is our best marketing tool for recruiting MRC volunteers and is an incredible testament of building community resiliency in our community,” says DCHRC unit coordinator, Mary Goodwin.

More than 3,400 people attended the tri-county event, with the medical area serving at least a third of the people with the medical clinic: dental, vision, and mental health, women's health services, HIV and hepatitis C screening, immunizations, addiction screening, fluoride treatments, and other referral services such as Planned Parenthood.

PC is based on a national best practice model—Project Homeless Connect, which originated in San Francisco in 2004. Today, PC has been replicated in over 400 cities across the United States as well as Canada, Puerto Rico, and Australia. Once a year over 680 community volunteers partner with government, non-profits, businesses, schools, and the private sector to provide a one-stop shop of health, social, and humanitarian services for citizens struggling in Central Oregon.

## **Washington County's DEA Drug Take-Back Event**

On October 29, the Southwest Virginia (SWVA) MRC participated in Washington County's (VA) DEA Drug Take-Back event. This event was held at three outdoor venues from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Nine SWVA MRC volunteers were tasked with accepting

medications from people who either walked or drove to the outdoor venue. The volunteers separated over the counter and prescription medications for appropriate disposal by the sheriff's office.

The weather was a challenge for volunteers because the event was held outdoors while it was snowing; however, the event was successful because volunteers were able to be involved in a "very public event, which involved a very worthwhile public health activity," says unit coordinator, Kristina Morris.

The Washington County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition was so impressed by the professionalism of the volunteers who assisted with a similar event in April 2011 that the MRC unit was asked to support October's DEA Drug Take-back event. In addition, the SWVA MRC staffed the American Medicine Chest Drug-Take Back event in Wise County, Virginia, on November 12.

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## **MRC/NACCHO Connections**

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### **December: Give the Gift of Health or Preparedness**

In honor of the ongoing countdown to the 10th anniversary of the MRC, NACCHO is encouraging MRC units to engage in events each month. In December, contribute to the Gift of Health or Preparedness.

Build a preparedness kit for someone your care about.

## **Announcements**

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### **2011–2012 MRC CBA Update**

Submitted CBA applications are currently being reviewed. Awardees will be notified in December 2011. If you have any questions related to your CBA application, please e-mail [mrc@naccho.org](mailto:mrc@naccho.org).

### **Call for 2012 DCVMRC Recognition Award Nominations**

The Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (DCVMRC) will present several awards during an MRC Awards Luncheon at the 2012 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit in Nashville, TN. The Summit will be held during May 21–25, 2012.

We are now accepting nominations for the award

categories listed below. Please review the attached 2012 DCVMRC Recognition Awards Technical Assistance document, including detailed instructions on how to make nominations and access the system.

The application is available at <https://eweb.naccho.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?WebCode=LoginRequired&expires=yes&Site=NACCHO> and is a *nomination*— the nominator will be providing information for an outstanding MRC unit leader, volunteer, housing organization, or partner and providing answers that justify why that individual/organization deserves an award based on the criteria outlined in the application.

You are welcome and encouraged to nominate multiple people for each category and for as many categories for which you have nominees. Each nomination must be added separately.

Please complete the DCVMRC Recognition Awards online nomination form by Friday, December 16, 2011 at 5 p.m. (EST).

Contact [MRCAwards@naccho.org](mailto:MRCAwards@naccho.org) if you need technical assistance with the online application.

If you have any questions about the DCVMRC Recognition Awards, contact LTJG Katie Hager at [Katie.Hager@hhs.gov](mailto:Katie.Hager@hhs.gov).

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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