

Central Oregon Health Departments Launch New Pilot Project

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has funded a \$65,000 grant to explore how sharing resources across counties might help Central Oregon health departments fulfill their mission of protecting and promoting the health of the communities they serve.



The two-year grant will enable Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson County commissioners and local health administrators to explore ways of sharing resources in order to provide more efficient and effective public health services.

Communities across the country increasingly rely on public health departments for services ranging from immunizations and health education to disaster preparedness and response. In recent years, funding for public health has dropped significantly even as the mission of public health departments has continued to expand.

The grant will support creation of an effective and cost-efficient shared model of public health emergency preparedness to enhance the protection, safety, and resilience of the Central Oregon community. A key goal of the project is to regionalize the Public Health Reserve Corps disaster volunteer program across all three counties, where it now only resides within Deschutes County.

Sixteen projects in 14 states are being funded through the [Center for Sharing Public Health Services](#). The Center will help health officials, policymakers, and other key stakeholders identify and share best practices as a strategy to expand the quality and availability of services while also improving efficiency.

Deschutes County Public Health Preparedness Coordinator Mary Goodwin is leading the project. “We are really honored and pleased to be selected for this grant and are especially excited that our project is the only one designed exclusively to focus on public health preparedness,” said Goodwin.

The Center is a national initiative managed by the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

For more information about the Cross Jurisdictional Public Health Preparedness project, please contact Deschutes County Preparedness Coordinator Mary Goodwin at (541) 322-7466 or marygo@deschutes.org.

Read about other inspiring Medical Reserve Corps efforts

Read about [Medical Reserve Corps news](#) from around the country including volunteer work on [Hurricane Sandy](#), Medical Reserve Corps [mergers](#), a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant for [pet preparedness](#), and a disaster drill with the [Teen Community Emergency Response Team](#).

Also check out Medical Reserve Corps [National Newsletters](#) including MRC In Focus and MRC In Touch Newsletters for news about medical and support services for homeless veterans, coordinated response to the Colorado wildfires, and much more!



Oregon volunteers kick-off 2013 VISTA style

The Oregon Health Authority's VISTA Partnership Project has started 2013 in prime fashion. Twenty-four VISTAs serve on a number of different projects including public health department accreditation, Medical Reserve Corps, Healthy People, Office of Equity and Inclusion, and Vulnerable Populations.



In January alone, the team served roughly 3,840 hours, which is a value of over \$95,000. VISTA members have also formed 30 new partnerships, created 68 new materials, and generated 12 media exposures. With their focus on the AmeriCorps*VISTA mission of combating poverty in the United States, the VISTA team's hard work has made a big impact.

Anthony Vendetti, one of the team members, has been focusing on emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations in Newport. In January, Vendetti completed his emergency preparedness plan, which included information on "How to Create a Go Kit," evacuation plans, an emergency contact form, and helpful resources in the event of a disaster.

"Emergency preparedness is important because everybody is vulnerable to some type of disaster," said Vendetti. "By learning about local hazards and becoming prepared for them, individuals can help their community respond and recover instead of becoming a victim."

The VISTA team also took part in a Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service in Bend. Volunteering at a local elementary school, 238 VISTA and community volunteers worked with Volunteer Connect on a number of projects including building a fence for chickens, weeding a garden, cleaning and organizing a shed, and replacing a pergola.

"It feels great," said Natasha Smith, Special Projects Manager at Volunteer Connect. "That was what we are trying to promote: people giving back to their community and making it a 'day on' instead of a 'day off.'"

Joey Zayas, VISTA Leader for the Oregon Health Authority VISTA Partnership Project, agrees. "It was such a joy to volunteer along with my VISTA teammates to really make a difference in the local community. I am extremely proud to be working alongside so many wonderful, selfless people!"

For more information about becoming a VISTA volunteer, contact Joseph Zayas, VISTA Leader, at Joseph.Zayas@dhsosha.state.or.us or (971) 673-1713.

Wasco County gets Healthy and Fit!

By Andrea Pena

The Wasco County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) received \$7,000 in funding from the non-competitive Capacity Building Award that will be directed toward community outreach and engagement. The funding will go toward the purchase of equipment and training items to support the “Healthy and Fit The Dalles Middle School (TDMS)” program.



What is “Healthy and Fit TDMS?”

Wasco County MRC volunteers will deliver an after-school program providing physical activity and health education opportunities to students in partnership North Central Public Health District, North Wasco County School District 21, and The Dalles Middle School (TDMS). The “Healthy and Fit TDMS” project is modeled on First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign – an initiative dedicated to solving the problem of obesity.

District 21 has committed an after-school coordinator, healthy dinner program, facilities, and an activity bus to support this highly-needed project at no cost. The North Central Public Health District will provide public health nurses to train MRC volunteers on health education basics to apply during educational sessions with students.

“Healthy and Fit TDMS” will serve as a pilot for future outreach in other Wasco County schools, and it will feature the following classes, activities, and information:

- Dance-infused classes
- Indoor/outdoor sports and games
- Circuit training
- Walks and hikes
- Lessons on food as fuel, proper hydration, and nutrition
- A weekly flyer for parents about classes, schedule and educational content in both English and Spanish
- A “Healthy and Fit TDMS” page on the North Central Public Health District website
- A “Healthy and Fit TDMS” Facebook page
- Monthly educational classes for kids and parents with speakers covering topics such as physical fitness, healthy living, safety, and emergency readiness.

The project will enhance the existing MRC training program by offering an opportunity to activate MRC members for missions following standard operating protocols. Call-down drills activating MRC volunteers to attend after-school sessions will test Wasco County MRC’s emergency notification and communications procedures, and the MRC Coordinator will perform these mock activation exercises using the SERV-OR alert System.

Resourceful sustainability efforts in Washington County

Washington County's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) has always been solely funded with county staff time and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Capacity Building Awards. Recent funding cuts have led to decreases in both MRC staff time and fewer dollars from NACCHO.



As a result the Washington County team has gotten creative in efforts to ensure the sustainability of its MRC.

*Just how were they able to tackle the challenge? In an interview with **Danielle Brown**, AmeriCorps*VISTA, MRC Volunteer Coordinator, Cynthia Valdivia, Emergency Preparedness Health Educator, and Sue Mohnkern, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program Supervisor, they share the process and outcomes of the group's resourceful planning.*

What made you realize that you needed to get creative to ensure the sustainability of Washington County's MRC program?

As the fourth-year AmeriCorps VISTA, Danielle's job has been to continue the work on sustainability planning for the MRC unit that began in 2009. With budget limitations, and a lack of county staff time, the Washington County MRC had not been able to have meetings, newsletters, trainings, exercises, or networking events on a regular and consistent basis. We knew this wouldn't be enough, and we needed to figure out how to make up for these losses.

What resources did you turn to?

At the same time that we were weighing the effects of these threats, we joined with the state and a number of other counties to apply for and utilize AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers to help us initially organize and manage our county's MRC and, more importantly, plan for sustaining this important resource – particularly as our preparedness funding began to decrease.

It was the perfect way to utilize the MRC volunteers by providing needed services and outreach events in our community, and – just as important – the VISTAs were given the opportunity to develop an active and supportive unit that met the qualifications, skills, and interests of the MRC volunteers.

How did the process get launched?

The AmeriCorps*VISTAs began to research models for sustainable practices and units around the country. Several different models for sustainability were explored and presented, and the one using volunteer leaders was identified as the most successful and the best fit for Washington County.

Over time, the VISTAs have interviewed other MRC units who operated with volunteers as leaders and worked with our MRC volunteers on developing four specific Leadership Roles and Board Member positions. Once these roles and positions were defined, the next step involved was talking with the MRC group and determining their interest in volunteering for these leadership positions.

Marion County MRC Units, and they've been an inspiration for us. The Marion County MRC unit's structure was especially useful as a model for our leadership team roles.

We aren't sure if other MRC units around the state are considering similar structural changes, but we'd be happy to share our findings with anyone looking for information.

What are you most inspired by or looking forward to?

I'm very excited to see such a wonderful group of MRC volunteers in these leadership roles. I have no doubt that they will be able to maintain the sustainability of the MRC unit!

OREGON PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

SERV-OR plays critical role in emergency preparedness



SERV-OR volunteers in Portland continue to complete the hands-on Mass Antibiotic Dispensing training provided by the Cities Readiness Initiative. Like regions all over the nation, Oregon continues to build and maintain the plans and workforce needed to dispense large quantities of antibiotics to the population on short notice.

Since June 2012, the region's Cities Readiness Initiative has trained 80 health care volunteers from local Medical Reserve / Health Reserve Corps units as well as the State Managed Volunteer Pool. During the 4-hour training, participants learn from both presentations and group activities about operating a closed mass medical countermeasure dispensing site in a public health emergency.

The sessions cover the Strategic National Stockpile, client flow management, core roles and responsibilities of staff, and demobilization of a point of dispensing (POD).

Volunteers participate in three hands-on training opportunities: working in groups to design a POD, learning the three critical jobs in a POD, and, finally, setting up and running the POD where volunteers role-play both dispensing staff and clients who need life-saving medication.

The training was originally launched as part of the Push Partner Registry, an initiative that helps local organizations prepare to rapidly dispense medical countermeasures to their own staff and family in a public health emergency. Registration was recently expanded to SERV-OR volunteers in order to build a workforce of credentialed health care volunteers who can be ready to staff large points of dispensing.

Opening the doors to SERV-OR volunteers has been welcomed by the program. "Medical Reserve and Health Reserve Corps volunteers are critical to the success of our public health mass antibiotic dispensing campaign following a major public health event," said Cristin Corcoran, Program Coordinator for the Cities Readiness Initiative and instructor for the classes. "They bring unique value, education, and insight to these trainings, and I'm glad they're here."

After successfully completing the training, registered SERV-OR volunteers have the achievement added to their volunteer profile. Should the need arise, their state or local unit managers can quickly pull up a roster of volunteers who are pre-trained on point of dispensing operations.

The training and exposure to large dispensing operations can also help volunteers prepare to participate in other large disaster operations where clear organization and coordination are needed to rapidly provide service to large numbers of affected people.

For more information contact Cristin Corcoran, CRI Program Coordinator, at Cristin_Corcoran@co.washington.or.us or (503) 846-8246.