

VIPR Update

Mississippi State Department of Health

October, 2008

A very personal thanks...

Volume 1 Issue 3

This past Labor Day weekend proved to be a long one around here....not in a good way. Indeed, it was a trying time for many of us in the State of Mississippi as I am certain that it was for our neighboring Gulf States. Although we endeavor to prepare for impending hazards, emergencies and disasters such as Hurricane Gustav, whom we had the displeasure of experiencing a few weeks ago, each natural disaster brings new challenges and opportunities. Challenges in that, although we plan and plan, there is always something new and different that necessitates we change our plans. Herein lies the opportunity to generate lessons learned and make an even better plan. However, it is comforting to know that there is at least one aspect of these experiences that remains constant....the indomitable power of the human spirit that is reflected in those who selflessly volunteer their time, effort, knowledge, and skills in times of crisis.

To those of you in the Volunteers in Preparedness Registry (VIPR) who answered our calls for help during this trying time, to those who left their homes and jobs to deploy to the devastated areas and shelters, to those of you who were there to offer help in any way possible and to those who just wanted to help.....**thank you.** Your prompt response and dedication to your fellow citizens proves that working together, we can help our state to be an even better place to live in and be proud of. — Laveta Moody-Thomas



Northwest Public Health District I Hosts Public Health Emergency Volunteer Training

The Northwest Public Health District I office recently held a public health emergency volunteer training on Saturday, June 28, 2008 at the Mississippi National Guard Armory in Batesville, MS. The enthusiastic volunteers representing all counties within District I and were welcomed by the District Health Administrator, Ms Diane Hargrove and the District Emergency Planning and Response staff members, Debbie Lewers, Surveillance Nurse, Gerald Aven, Emergency Response Coordinator, and Robbie Morgan, District Planner. Several planning staff members who traveled from Central Office to conduct the training were Laveta Moody-Thomas, State Volunteer Coordinator, Dr. C. J. Davis, State Planner, and Malcolm Dodd, Emergency Preparedness Training

Coordinator. The volunteers received training on the roles and responsibilities of volunteers during disasters, the Strategic National Stockpile and Points of Dispensing Sites, Family and Self Care, Disaster Mental Health and certification in Homeland Security Training on the Incident Command Structure. Continuing Education Credit was offered for the training.

The Benefits of Business Volunteerism

According to a 2003 Corporation for National and Community Service survey, 63.8 million Americans volunteered through their companies. Whether they work for large or small businesses, employees reap rewards when they volunteer. By offering their expertise, volunteers are able to refine and enhance their job skills while increasing networking opportunities; this is particularly pertinent for recent college graduates. AAA of Northern California has found a positive correlation between employee promotions and those whom volunteer. The company attributes this relationship to increased visibility of employee skills to management. (Stanndard-Friel, "How Employee Volunteers Multiply Your Community Impact," *On Philanthropy*, 12/2/05).

A business also benefits from promoting volunteerism. According to a survey of 248 employee volunteer managers, 97% felt employee volunteering provided a way to improve teamwork; 4% believe volunteering raised employee moral, 58% use the volunteer program for recruitment and employee retention, and 100% thought volunteering improved the company's image (Points of Light, 2000).

Larger corporations typically establish a Community Giving department or assign responsibilities to their Human Resources division to organize, administer, and track outreach efforts. These departments start by making sure that the outreach effort aligns with the company's mission. For example, a wholesale grocer may only allow volunteerism that promotes hunger eradication.

Local communities benefit enormously from the assistance of small business owners. Some of these contributions are nominal, such as supporting a local athletic team, providing food for community events, supplying products for raffles, and donating office supplies and equipment to nonprofits.

Mississippi State Department of Health

Post Office Box 1700
570 E. Woodrow Wilson Ave.
Jackson, MS 39215-1700

Phone: 601-576-7680
Fax: 601-576-7270
Email: Laveta.moody-thomas@msdh.state.ms.us

***The Volunteers in Preparedness Registry (VIPR) is a preparedness program sponsored by the Mississippi state Department of Health, Office of Emergency Planning and Response (OEPR). It is a secure database of pre-credentialed volunteers who are trained to provide a coordinated response to emergencies in support of our established public health and emergency response systems. The VIPR Update is a product of the public health emergency volunteer program. Visit the VIPR website at <http://volunteer.msdh.state.ms.us> to register and create your own secured personal profile.*

Training Opportunities

The most recent statewide training cycle was hugely successful and concluded on September 10, 2008, however, a new training cycle is being planned. The new training cycle promises to bring the newest and most up to date information on emergency preparedness of importance to you, plus opportunities to participate in disaster exercises and drills. Stay tuned!

If your business, organization, or faith-based institution would like to schedule a public health emergency preparedness volunteer training or need more information on how to become a public health emergency volunteer, please contact Laveta Thomas at 601-576-7680 or 601-933-7181.

Seven Reasons That Volunteering Can Work for You

Think volunteering is only about doing something good for others? Think again.

- #1: It will boost your visibility (for free).
- #2: You'll sharpen your business skills.
- #3: It doesn't require a huge time commitment.
- #4: You'll make meaningful community connections.
- #5: It's time to expand your professional horizons.
- #6: You'll appreciate what you have.
- #7: When everything else goes to hell, at least you'll have one thing to feel good about!

To read the full article please go to: <http://www.realtor.org/rmomag.NSF/pages/Feat3200711?OpenDocument>

Source: Realtor Magazine
