

## CONGRATULATIONS ON A SUCCESSFUL ALERT!

Disasters typically occur when they are least expected. Yet these events can become opportunities for an MRC unit to shine. Such was the case on February 26, when thunderstorms that had raged since Thursday morning knocked out power across the region by that Friday afternoon.

Westford Emergency Management notified the Westford Health Department Director (who is also the MRC Director) that 1600 households had been without power since the night before. Predictions of when electricity would be restored ranged "from two hours to four days." Public safety officials knew that many frail, elderly, or otherwise vulnerable residents were at risk. It was unclear how severe the impact on residents would be across the region, and how many families would need temporary housing. Thus our MRC Director authorized a call-out to put the unit on alert for possible shelter service.

Members replied to the call-out immediately with their availability. Within two hours, enough volunteers were signed up to support the opening of a shelter that evening. Additional members let us know when they could help throughout the weekend. Meanwhile, power was gradually being restored to most households. The few remaining families who needed lodging made other arrangements. It became clear eventually that a shelter would no longer be required.

Westford Town Manager Jodi Ross said afterwards, "We are very fortunate to have the MRC so responsive to our residents' needs. These volunteers are standing by, trained and ready to go in case of any and all emergencies. I was very impressed by their willingness to stand by for a couple of hours on a Friday night, just in case a shelter was needed for our town residents. Thanks to all MRC volunteers who provide this invaluable service to our town...it is greatly appreciated!"

Please accept our sincere thanks to all who rose to the occasion, with your spectacular and immediate response.



UMV MRC  
23 Depot St.  
Westford, MA 01886

PLEASE OPEN ME NOW!  
EVENTS BEGIN MAY 18  
TRAINING DAY JUNE 19  
SIGN UP NOW!

**Civilian Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities!**



## UPPER MERRIMACK VALLEY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

WWW.UMVMRC.ORG

MEMBER APPRECIATION ISSUE  
JUNE 2010

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR STAFF

Your unit leaders welcomed April as National Volunteer Month by reflecting on ways to acknowledge your dedicated service. Thus we are devoting this special issue to recognizing your efforts, and are planning a series of events that may be of interest.

The photos across pages 4 and 5 show our members engaged in an ever-widening array of opportunities. The articles discuss our activities, as we applaud the dedication of our talented volunteers.

Both the national MRC program and our local unit are firmly entrenched in promoting public health initiatives. There are now over 880 MRC units, with nearly 207,000 members across the country. Members in our own unit continue to attend training programs, raise awareness of personal health and preparedness, and respond to calls for community service.

One of the UMV MRC's most recent major accomplishments was our response to the H1N1 global pandemic. Members supported flu clinics across the region, to protect residents against both seasonal and H1N1 viruses, as well as pneumonia. Read the article inside for the astonishing statistics, as our incredible volunteers worked tirelessly to combat the spread of disease in our own community.

Our hearts go out to the residents of Haiti and Chile, as they strive to rebuild after devastating earthquakes. Many members have asked how they can help. Because MRC units are intended as a local resource, our program was not called for international deployment. We continue to monitor these situations, while sharing information about resources that are dedicated to earthquake response in foreign countries. Meanwhile, we continue to learn all we can from such tragedies, including ways to help disaster victims and safeguard our own communities.

We hope to see you at this year's activities! Warmest regards,

*Sandy Collins RN*, Director

*Nancy Burns EMT*, Coordinator



*This group of members is tired but happy after serving at the last clinic supported by the UMV MRC during the 2009-2010 flu season.*

### THE MISSION OF THE UMV MRC

The mission of the Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps is to recruit, train, and deploy members for disaster preparedness in three areas:

- Public health emergencies
- Mass casualty events
- Community service activities

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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*UMV MRC Web Site:*

[www.umvmrc.org](http://www.umvmrc.org)

*MA MRC Web Site:*

[www.mamedicalreservecorp.org](http://www.mamedicalreservecorp.org)

*National MRC Web Site:*

[www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov)

*Communities Served:* Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, and Westford (host agency).

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**NATIONAL NOTES**

The UMV MRC staff remains active in issues beyond the regional level. Your Director applied our deployment experiences to a work group that published national MRC guidelines for supporting medical special needs shelters. Read the completed guide at <http://medicalreservecorps.gov/PromisingPracticesToolkit/GD/MSNS>. Your Coordinator represents New England MRCs at the national Capacity Building Work Group. Both staff members remain active in statewide and New England MRC initiatives as well. The following letter from Rob Tosatto thanks all of our members for their service.

*Dear Upper Merrimack Valley MRC Volunteers,*

*The past year has been a tremendous success for the Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps (UMVMRC). Your Director, Sandy Collins, and Coordinator, Nancy Burns, have kept me and the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) staff well aware of your significant achievements and frequent activities.*

*In April 2009, we were proud to recognize one of your fellow volunteers, Diana Walker-Moyer, with the Outstanding MRC Responder Award at the Integrated Training Summit in Dallas, Texas. This recognition should serve as a source of pride for all of you, as no volunteer works alone. This award is a reflection of the good you all do within your community.*

*This year, the seasonal influenza season included the added obstacle of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. There was greater need than ever for volunteers to provide vaccinations, as well as offering administrative and logistical support, running clinics, answering patient questions, and keeping the flow moving and organized. UMVMRC volunteers played in integral role in your community's clinics through many hours of service and support. More than 120 volunteers donated their time and talents to over 20 clinics over two months. We have heard of your unbelievable selflessness and flexibility as schedules and locations changed. Your understanding helped the health department to provide quick response to the call for H1N1, seasonal, and pneumococcal vaccinations. You are to be commended and applauded. Your efforts are making your community safer, healthier and more resilient.*

*Please know that the OCVMRC shares your stories with leadership within the Department of Health and Human Services and with our national partners and stakeholders. Your outstanding efforts make promoting the MRC an easy, fun, and proud job for me and the entire staff of the OCVMRC. We look forward to hearing what you will accomplish next.*

*Warm regards,*

*CAPT Robert J. Tosatto  
Director, Medical Reserve Corps Program*

**NEW SURGEON GENERAL**

The OMVMRC now reports to a new U.S. Surgeon General: Dr. Regina Benjamin!



We look forward to supporting the Surgeon General's health priorities over the coming year.

**MEMBER RECEIVES NATIONAL MRC AWARD**

One of the two MRC volunteers from across the U.S. to receive an *Outstanding MRC Responder Award* at the MRC's annual meeting was Diana Walker-Moyer, RNP. As one of the first 20 members to join our unit at the initial focus group in June 2004, Diana has continued to participate in our activities each season, and has served on international relief missions. During the regional ice storms, she assumed medical responsibility for Westford's Special Needs emergency shelter before resuming her 'day job' at a university health clinic.

Congratulations, Diana!



*Rear Admiral Robert C. Williams, Acting Deputy Surgeon General of the U.S. (left), and Captain Rob Tosatto presented Diana Walker-Moyer with an award at last year's Integrated Summit.*

**COMING EVENTS**

Please contact the Coordinator at 978-399-2549 or [Nburns@WestfordMA.gov](mailto:Nburns@WestfordMA.gov) to sign up for activities of interest. Also check the web site, [www.umvmrc.org](http://www.umvmrc.org), for updates.

**Training Day** – Our third Training Day has been *moved out two weeks*, from June 5 to 19:

**Date:** June 19 (Sat.)

**Time:** 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**Location:** Weed Hall at U.Mass Lowell

**MMS Seminar** – “Avoiding a Disaster During a Disaster: Improving Medical Volunteer Response.”

**Date:** May 19 (Weds.)

**Time:** 4 to 8:30 p.m.

**Location:** MA Medical Society – Waltham Headquarters

**Credits:** Up to 3.5 CEUs.

Space limited; call 800-843-6356 to register. See [www.massmed.org/cme\\_events](http://www.massmed.org/cme_events) for details. **(DO NOT contact the UMV MRC Coordinator;** seminar is offered by MMS.)

**AHA Classes** – Two-year American Heart Assn. certification. *Sign up early;* maximum class size 20:

**Heartsaver CPR/AED refresher** (non-medical)

**Date:** May 24 (Mon.)

**Time:** 6 to 10 p. m.

**Location:** Abbot School in Westford

**Cost:** \$5 for AHA certification card

**First Aid** (medical and non-medical)

**Date:** May 26 (Weds.)

**Time:** 6 to 10 p. m.

**Location:** Chelmsford Town Hall

**Cost:** \$15 for AHA workbook and certification card

**Healthcare Professional CPR/AED refresher** (medical)

**Date:** June 1 (Tues.)

**Time:** 6 to 10 p. m.

**Location:** Police Training Center in Lowell

**Cost:** \$5 for AHA certification card

**Health Fairs** – All levels of members can staff our display table at fairs throughout the year, to discuss the MRC and preparedness issues – including care of pets in a disaster – and offer health screenings. Longer events can be staffed in shifts of three to four hours as needed. Two major festivals where MRC help is needed include these late summer Saturdays:

**Dracut Old Home Day**  
School Complex  
Sept. 11, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Yankee Doodle Homecoming**  
Billerica Center  
Sept. 18, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



**MDPH COMMISSIONER THANKS MRCs**

The following letter from Massachusetts Department of Public Health Commissioner John Auerbach acknowledges the role that MRC units played in protecting MA residents against H1N1.



DEVAL L. PATRICK  
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JUDYANN BIGBY, MD  
SECRETARY

JOHN AUERBACH  
COMMISSIONER

April 13, 2010

Dear MRC Volunteer,

The emergence of H1N1 flu last April created an unprecedented set of challenges for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the nation – from the initial uncertainty and widespread anxiety regarding the severity of the associated illnesses, to the prospect of widespread school closings and the shortages of vaccines.

We believe it is important to acknowledge and honor the work that you and others did in the last 10 months to address the pandemic. Therefore we awarded the Medical Reserve Corps Units of Massachusetts a “Public Health Hero” award, that was presented to an MRC representative at the H1N1 Summit - “Responding to H1N1 Influenza: Lessons Learned” - on March 22.

The Medical Reserve Corps was a particularly important partner to DPH by playing a critical role in assisting local health and school departments and other vaccine providers in the mass vaccination and education efforts. Hundreds of volunteer Medical Reserve Corps Unit members from the 45 active units in Massachusetts responded to the H1N1 emergency by providing thousands of hours of their time staffing H1N1 clinics across the state.

We are very grateful for all of the work done by the thousands of volunteers whose support of the Department of Public Health’s H1N1 response helped to both educate and vaccinate the public. Your hard work and dedication throughout the overall effort contributed immensely to our success.

Sincerely,

John Auerbach  
Commissioner

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

**DEPLOYMENT TIP:  
CHECK YOUR  
E-MAIL!**

When we need to reach members for a call-out, our first approach is always done through e-mail. This method allows us to send one message to all 560 addresses in our distribution list, at the press of a button. As with the February 2010 stand-by alert, that action alone can be sufficient to recruit the necessary staffing. We would move on to phone calls only if additional volunteers are required, or if we need to confirm sign-ups immediately.

We are well aware that not every member has a PC or checks e-mail daily. Also, members themselves are sometimes affected by power outages, and thus cannot access their messages. These are among the members we would call if more volunteers are needed. However, e-mail is by far the most effective way to reach the greatest number of our members quickly, and to send details about the response. Check to be sure your spam filters will allow messages from our listserv address: UMVMRC <[listadmin@umvmrc.org](mailto:listadmin@umvmrc.org)>

If you have access to a PC, or if your account has changed, please send us an e-mail using your new address. (If you’re not sure whether we have your current account on file, just send us a message so we can check.)

Also note that every deployment is strictly voluntary! We simply need to know how best to contact you, and the kinds of support you can provide. Help us reach you better by keeping your contact information up to date.  
**THANKS!**

**MRC MEMBERS  
TAKE THE CAKE!**

June 30, 2010 marks our unit's sixth year of active membership. Thanks so much for your dedicated service.



*Members remained for a group photo after a Westford flu clinic in November 2009.*

**RECORD-SETTING FLU RESPONSE**

The UMV MRC has supported flu clinics every year since our active membership began in 2004. Our response that fall occurred when many people across Massachusetts were alarmed by vaccine shortages. MRC members supported phone screenings to reassure area residents, as well as providing inoculations and helping at clinics. During subsequent years, members supported increasing numbers of clinics to vaccinate against seasonal flu.

Special concerns were raised in April 2009 when the Novel H1N1 Virus emerged. The H1N1 pandemic reached historic proportions, and drew on every bit of expertise municipal services could offer. An influenza pandemic is an epidemic of the flu that spreads on a worldwide scale and infects a large proportion of the human population. Public health officials had long predicted that another pandemic was due, based on knowledge of the way flu viruses mutate, and the severity of their impact. (Most noteworthy was the “Spanish Flu” of 1918, which killed 30 to 50 million worldwide.)

The H1N1 virus was identified too late in the year to be included among the usual seasonal flu vaccines. The added complexity of providing two vaccines, coupled with delays in delivery, and adherence to CDC guidelines of administering vaccine to target groups, made it all the more difficult to schedule clinics.

One of the reasons many believed the H1N1 pandemic had less of an impact than what was originally feared, was because health departments and the MRC supported surveillance, vastly expanded vaccination efforts, and provided widespread public education campaigns. MRC units across the nation responded and offered surge capacity to public health departments. Our unit supported a record number of clinics this season, spanning a longer duration than ever before.

Many thanks to the members who served clinic after clinic, protecting their communities against serious diseases!

**UMV MRC Response by the Numbers**

Clinics supported by our members this season: **37**  
UMV communities requesting MRC support: **5**  
Span of clinics: **9/22/09 through 2/11/10**  
Members serving at clinics over the 5 months: **175**  
Most clinics supported by one member: **17**  
Positions (“shifts”) filled by MRC: **444**  
Doses of vaccine provided: **14,585**



*MRC member administers a pediatric inoculation at a family clinic in Tewksbury*

**AND NOW, A WORD FOR OUR SPONSORS...**

We extend our sincere thanks to PrideStar EMS for funding our last Training Day, and to the School of Health and Environment at U.Mass Lowell for providing the use of Weed Hall for these programs! We also appreciate the kind donation of Public Health Preparedness guidebooks and a large order of lanyards from the Dracut Rotary. We truly welcome and appreciate such generous contributions!



# 4 Look at the breadth and depth of your accomplishments! 5

The December 2008 ice storm caused power outages and required special needs shelters.



A stepped-up focus on animal preparedness offered tips on pets in disaster at festivals.



We partnered with the Boy Scouts to staff their muster's medical tent, and taught first aid concepts.



At the national level, our unit was recognized at the Integrated Summit.



Because our first Training Day was such a huge success...



Meetings with New England MRC leaders included a trip to the DMAT operations warehouse in Rhode Island.



Public events raised awareness of the MRC, and applied our skills in BP and cholesterol screening.



...we held another one last June! Courses included sheltering, ICS, and "CBRNE" hazards.



The regional EDS exercise was our single biggest event in two years.



Our busiest flu season ever included an H1N1 talk by Dr. Al De Maria, our local response to the global pandemic, and member involvement in record numbers!

