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UPPER MERRIMACK VALLEY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

WWW.UMVMRC.ORG

RALLYING FOR READINESS!
JULY 2025

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR STAFF

These newsletters have become our 'annual report,' in which we look back over the past fiscal year at our accomplishments. This issue reveals the program's continuing tradition of tireless service at national, state, and local levels. MRC leadership does whatever it takes in empowering volunteers to carry out life-saving deployments.

We are thrilled that Dr. Mazanec contributed this year's national notes (p. 2). This means your activities *from the past six months alone* are being recognized at the highest levels! The sidebar recalls the learning opportunities from this year's Preparedness Summit in San Antonio (April 29 to May 2), attended by 2400 colleagues. In one of the Town Hall meetings, your Coordinator suggested a well-received tagline for the MRC Program: "Saving Lives on a Shoestring!" We also had a presence at the pre-Summit MRC Leadership Workshop – which hosted nearly 150 unit leaders and state coordinators from 37 states and one territory, representing all 10 HHS regions. The MRC Program now has 734 units with 275,178 volunteers.

We hear from all sides that our unit has become indispensable! Through partnerships with senior centers, older UMV residents benefit from projects such as 'Safe Footing Kits,' and even a special Bone Health Day on July 22 that builds on last year's NACCHO Operational Readiness Award. Our relationship with HOSA (see back cover) supports the other end of the age spectrum: teenagers exploring health careers. Through the UMV Public Health Coalition, we've inoculated residents of all ages against diseases such as seasonal flu. Given the many uncertainties swirling around us, this is among the best times in our nation's history to provide care for those who are the most vulnerable. Thank you so much for bringing your diverse skills and tender hearts to those who need your help!

Warmest regards,

Rae Dick, CP-FS—Director **Nancy Burns, EMT**—Coordinator

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

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MA MRC Web Site:

www.mamedicalreservecorps.org

National MRC Web Site:

<https://aspr.hhs.gov/mrc>

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



*UMV MRC members thanked the speakers at the May 9 seminar
for MDPH Region 3 on PFA: Psychological First Aid.*



Calling all contributors! We'd love to hear your thoughts... about this newsletter, the UMV MRC, tips we should consider

for outreach, or potential needs in the region that you think we might address. Kindly contact the unit's Director or Coordinator anytime to weigh in!

NOTE FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE



Dear Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps Volunteers,

Your commitment and service continue to set you apart—not just in Massachusetts, but across the entire MRC network. Your passion and dedication are evident in everything you do, and we don't have to look far to see impressive examples of your recent impact. Let's take a moment to reflect on some of the remarkable work you've accomplished in recent months.

You started strong, setting ambitious goals from the outset. Last December, you launched a project to provide 100 "safe footing kits" to Westford residents over age 55—especially those at risk of falling. By January, you exceeded that goal, distributing 150 kits (complete with ice scrapers and gloves) to residents in both Westford and Chelmsford. Your unit also delivered Basic First Aid training to students with special needs aged 18 to 22.

In February, you participated in early planning meetings to help launch the Northeast Massachusetts Disaster Animal Response Team (DART). On February 13th, you introduced the MRC to the Greater Lowell Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC). Later that month, volunteers co-taught Heartsaver CPR/AED to eight community members.

In March, your unit hosted its first-ever UMV MRC Member Open House, welcoming 30 participants—and even bringing a new social worker into your ranks. Eleven of your members joined 136 attendees at the second annual MA MRC Statewide Training Day in Worcester.

Most recently, at the NACCHO Preparedness Summit in April, I had the privilege of reconnecting with your outstanding Coordinator, Nancy Burns, who delivered two excellent presentations. Her contributions once again placed the UMV MRC in the national spotlight, highlighting your leadership and innovation.

Your momentum has only continued since the Summit. You've provided regular health screenings, strengthened partnerships with local agencies, and even collaborated across state lines. Nearly 20 of you traveled to Rhode Island for training at the Training, Innovation, and Leadership Institute—further reinforcing your commitment to professional development and public service.

So far this year, more than 80 of you have contributed over 380 volunteer hours—resulting in an economic impact valued at nearly \$14,000. Your unit continues to be one that leads by example to build community resilience by preparing for and responding to disasters and emergencies.

Congratulations on an incredible year to date! As you look ahead to your upcoming slate of activities, we can't wait to see what's next. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to health, safety, and community resilience.

Brian M. Mazanec, PhD
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Director, HHS Coordination Operations and
Response Element
Director (A), Center for Preparedness



Many thanks to Dr. Mazanec for providing the national perspective in this year's newsletter! It was an honor to represent our unit at the MRC pre-Summit workshop, co-presenting with Erik Hanley of the Salt Lake County MRC on volunteer management ("Herding Cats"). The general sessions topic with June Vutrano of the Maricopa County MRC was on capacity building ("Crossing the Rubicon"). We can be proud of our colleagues from across the nation who work so hard throughout the year to keep us safe in times of disaster!

REGIONAL ROUND-UP



Hello UMV MRC! The Office of the Medical Reserve Corps (OMRC) has continued to serve as a consistent, reliable, exceptional organization in these often-uncertain times. The volunteers in your MRC unit prove it daily – thank you!!

New England currently stands at 82 MRC units: ME-2, VT-7, NH-13, MA-32, CT-24, and RI-4. Three units have decided to de-register over the past year, and two units have combined their talents for efficiency in their area.

Of the 4123 activities last year in New England, MRC volunteers contributed over 66,000 hours of their time with an economic value of \$2.6M. Their activities included unit administration, training and exercises, public health outreach, and true response activations. Unit leaders continue to be creative in their responses to community needs:

- Vermont has new programming in Senior Preparedness.
- Rhode Island's new state-of-the-art training institute provides education for leaders and volunteers across New England.
- Massachusetts expanded their MRC training days across the five MDPH regions, and held a day-long event, via their STTRONG awards received through the Office of the Medical Reserve Corps.
- Maine continues to explore new avenues for MRC volunteers. Recently, they lost one of their original units due to severe cuts in their hospital budgets.
- New Hampshire is growing its MRC training opportunities, and has created some legislative action regarding volunteer liability protections.
- Connecticut uses their five regions to create learning outlets and administration for their 24 MRC units.

Now in my 20th year as a regional representative to the National Program Office, I am constantly amazed at the contributions, creativity and efforts of every volunteer and unit leader! Despite the uncertainties we are facing at the federal level, I want to confirm that our high-level leadership notices and values the MRC Program. Every effort is being made to protect the program and recognition of everyday efforts by local leaders and volunteers.

Thank you for all you do, every day!

Jennifer Frenette, Region I (New England) MRC Liaison

DID YOU KNOW...

As part of this year's 'Safe Footing Kits' project, we checked in with vulnerable residents who were listed on Westford's confidential Special Needs Emergency Registry. The status of some residents had changed over the past year, while others were simply grateful for well-check calls. We verified their data and asked if they would like us to deliver a kit, which many were pleased to accept.

In case you know of Westford residents who should be added to the list in our host community, the form is at <https://bit.ly/WestfordNeeds>. Access is also available by the QR code. Check with other UMV towns to see if they have a Registry for their own residents.

Call it a "two-fer:" Making sure we could contact those who would need the most immediate help in a disaster, and equipping those who were most at risk in winter with kits to prevent falls!



STATEWIDE MRC UPDATES

Recent Activities – The MA Department of Public Health’s Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management (MDPH OPEM) has been busy working on several statewide projects as part of the MRC-STTRONG Grant, which awarded \$838,680 to the Commonwealth in June 2023.

The funding was provided by the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR). Thirty-three awardees across the country received a total of \$50 million under the MRC State, Territory and Tribal Nations, Representative Organizations for Next Generation (MRC-STTRONG) grant program. The grant was provided through the American Rescue Plan. Of the priorities outlined under the grant, training, resources, and database enhancements have been at the forefront. Progress has been steady across each of the categories.



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AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

Training:

- Statewide Training Day** – DPH’s 3rd Annual Volunteer Training Day was held on March 4, allowing close to 150 volunteers from across the state to attend courses. Topics included the impact of climate change on health, liability and legal protections for volunteers, transformational resiliency, mass care sheltering basics, and emergency preparedness 101. A session on The Disaster Gap was presented by an MRC volunteer and emergency medicine physician, Christine Hernon, based on her experience in providing care during the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing.

Dr. Hernon has addressed numerous audiences, including those at the UMV MRC Training Day on October 5, about the vital role played by laypersons at the scene of sudden disasters across the U.S.
- Regional Training Days** – Five regional training days were held across the Commonwealth this May, where an introductory Disaster Behavioral Health training was provided by Dr. Khan and her team from the Center for Multicultural Mental Health (CMMH) at BU/BMC to volunteers from all units. The course offered a place to learn and practice the fundamentals of psychological first aid, while recognizing the importance of self-care and cultural responsiveness.

Ph.D.s Shamaila Khan and Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter led the PFA seminar offered for Region 3 on May 9, where 18 of the 30 attendees were members of the UMV MRC.
- Statewide Training Plan** – Built from both the volunteer training approach and a 2024 training assessment, a statewide MRC Training Plan has been developed as a suggested training guide for MA MRC unit leaders to share with local volunteers. The Plan provides options to guide MRC unit leaders and volunteers with an appropriate selection of training courses. Units can choose courses from the training matrix, add in other courses not listed, or create their own unit-specific courses based on the MRC core competencies.

Center momentarily:
BE PREPARED...OND WITH
- Training Curriculum** – A new course, “Essential Elements: Massachusetts MRC 101” has been developed. This online training introduces the MRC program, its mission, core competencies, and the role of local MRC units within MA. The course also details how MRC units function within the community, identifies volunteer roles and responsibilities, recommends training, and refers to policies and procedures for volunteers.

Unit Resources:

- **Regional Toolkit** - Each MRC region in MA was provided a list of items and asked to select supplies that can be used to support the essential emergency preparedness and response duties of the units within the region.
- **Digital Toolkit** - Digital items have been created to aid MRC leaders in building capacity. Topics addressed in the digital toolkit include guidance around volunteer management best practices, a deployment checklist, how to best address spontaneous volunteers, a social media guide, guidance around translation services, and suggestions regarding partnerships and recruitment opportunities.

MA Responds (Database) Enhancements:

- **MA Responds Orientation Refresh** – The current MA Responds orientation has been modernized. A self-paced online training course is now available to help unit leaders to learn more about the volunteer management database and how to maximize the system.
- **Badging Module Updates** – A template has been added to the badging module in the system to reflect behavioral health volunteers. Now there are currently three badge templates which are linked to a volunteer's profession: medical, non-medical, and behavioral health.
- **Text Message Notification Features** – The system currently has the capacity to notify volunteers of potential deployments using text messaging. This feature will be expanded in the new fiscal year and made more readily available to MRC leaders.

Looking Ahead:

While the future remains uncertain regarding many programs in public health, given the current federal landscape, DPH Commissioner Dr. Robbie Goldstein has reminded staff and our local public health partners that “We will meet these challenges together, and we will continue to do so with courage, integrity, and compassion.” This outlook stands true for the MRC program and all the amazing volunteers who dedicate their time, expertise, and passion to improving the health and well-being of their communities. Let us all continue marching forward in our efforts to keep the Commonwealth healthy, safe, and well prepared!

INOCULATION SUCCESS!

The 5 of our 7 UMV communities that use volunteers for their annual flu clinics requested us once again in autumn 2024. The number of people inoculated at the clinics in Billerica, Chelmsford, Lowell, Tewksbury, and Westford was 1608. Members filled 91 shifts, donating 439 hours, for an economic value of \$18,401.73. As Rae Dick, Director of the UMV MRC and the Westford Health Department remarked, “We would not be able to provide these valuable clinics without our MRC volunteers!” Westford town nurse and MRC member Gail Johnson added, “We vaccinated 693 town employees and residents for the flu this season, including pediatrics, thanks to the help of our amazing volunteers!”



Five of our nurses also served the City of Lowell in two tuberculosis clinics at an emergency shelter. Nicole Chauncey, RN recalls, “When I found myself in a staffing dilemma in July, I put in an urgent request to the MRC for volunteers and 3 nurses jumped right in to assist!” These nurses helped to perform TB risk and symptom assessments: 27 people were screened and tested for LTBI, and 29 children were vaccinated. “They did such an excellent job that I requested nurses to help again at the next event in September.” Two MRC nurses again provided TB risk and symptom assessments, while 20 people were screened for LTBI, and 19 individuals were tested for STIs. “This is just one example of the many ways that the MRC is essential to local public health.”

Building Regional Resilience

Sixty participants joined us for Training Day on October 5. Plenary and classroom sessions covered a wide range of topics to build our unit's response capacity.



Community outreach included health fairs, outdoor festivals, support of a 'Tour de Cure' cycling event for the American Diabetes Assn, and the 30th anniversary of the nation's only Public Health Museum.



This year we boosted our Safe Footing Kits project from 100 to 150 kits, delivered across two communities: Chelmsford and Westford.



Throughout The Year

One of our members represented us again this year at the Disaster Medical Teams Field Simulation. (Photos courtesy of Kate Flock / MGH Photography.)



We're exploring DART (Disaster Animal Response Team) involvement, given the importance of pet preparedness.

Training is one of our most vital activities, including CPR.

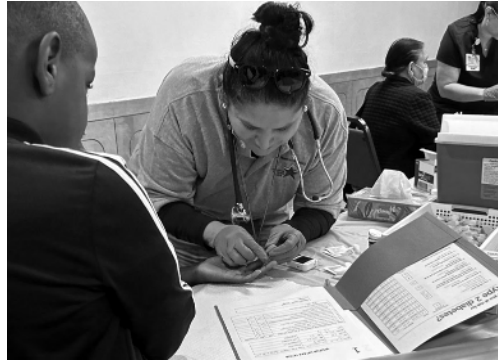


One of our signature activities is supporting seasonal flu clinics across the region.



LASA SIX-PACK!

It was an honor when our unit was asked to provide medical care at the October 2022 debut health clinic by the LASA Foundation. The Love All, Serve All volunteer physicians and care providers offer an array of free clinical services twice a year to the medically underserved across Greater Lowell. Between 10 and 12 UMV MRC members have continued to support every clinic, each April and October. We're eager to reinforce this wonderful and consistent partnership, having served our sixth consecutive clinic this spring.



UMV MRC volunteers at the April clinic included RNs, a CMA, a pharmacist, and EMTs. Translators provided essential services to support accurate cross-cultural communication.

These clinics are a 'win' for LASA, our unit, affiliates (translators, registration volunteers, cooks, and support entities), and especially those receiving care. The logistics alone are a major asset! Clients with transportation challenges and prohibitive work schedules can receive several essential services under one roof. There are free screenings for vital signs, glucose and cholesterol levels, and an array of specialty stations based on triage: cardiac, diabetes, dental, vision, and so forth. Despite heavy rainfall, the April 12 clinic served 258 visitors.



Promotions of the LASA clinic took place at WCAP 980 radio and local cable TV.

A unique feature this year was the invitation to assist with promoting the clinics. Your Coordinator was part of three-person teams with LASA representatives in radio and TV interviews. We look forward to the next clinic, scheduled for Saturday, October 25.

The lead physician shared his follow-up appreciation as follows: *I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude to the medical volunteers from the MRC. On behalf of the LASA providers, please accept my sincere and heartfelt thanks to this group of dedicated volunteers. It is always lovely to see all of you in action. This is a great coalition, and I envision that this is only going to get stronger and bigger. Some of the MRC team members had valuable input for improvement. Their great ideas are being discussed for implementation later. Everyone also liked your Radio and TV shows with us. As I always tell people, all of us as a team should feel honored to be serving the sick amidst us that are deprived of much-needed health care services. Thank you once again!*

Suman B, Koganti MD, FACS

UMV MRC PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL CERT

There is a long-standing relationship between the national programs of MRC and CERT: Community Emergency Response Team. Both entities focus on protecting area residents in times of disaster. At the first anniversary meeting of the new Tyngsboro CERT on March 17, your Coordinator was invited to present an 'Introduction to the MRC' and share how the two groups might interact. Several of our members are also cross-trained in CERT. More recently, our UMass MRC was delighted to support the second graduating class of a local CERT program by providing volunteer victims and an evaluator for their final exercise on April 14.

The UMass Lowell Office of Life Safety and Emergency Management, in collaboration with campus and community partners, hosted the final disaster simulation for the second graduating cohort of the UML's CERT program. This session completed the training for 18 students, faculty, and staff who are now certified as CERT members.

The CERT program is a new initiative at UML designed to equip community members with the skills and confidence to respond effectively during emergencies and disasters. Participants met twice a week for four weeks to complete the FEMA CERT curriculum. In addition to the core training, participants became certified in hands-only CPR and STOP THE BLEED, through sessions led by subject-matter experts. Training was facilitated by partners from across the emergency management spectrum – including UMass Lowell Police and EMS, Lowell Emergency Management, and Student Wellness.

The program culminated in a hands-on disaster simulation that tested the participants' ability to apply what they had learned in high-pressure scenarios. The exercise included three stations:

- A simulated multi-vehicle collision
- A partial building collapse requiring cribbing and victim extrication
- An explosion scene involving search and rescue, triage, treatment, and evacuation



Six UMass MRC members served as victims for the 'explosion' scenario. The seventh member monitored the three teams of students as they rotated through this station, offering evaluation and feedback.

CERT students practiced using a fire extinguisher to combat flames. Teams comprised of two to four students completed initial triage, evacuated patients, and provided first aid.



In March, the UML Graduate Student Government officially recognized the CERT program as a student organization. The university now plans to expand the club and offer two CERT training courses each year, one in the fall and one in the spring.

UMass Lowell is proud of this growing program and deeply appreciates the continued support of the City of Lowell, neighboring CERT teams, collegiate emergency managers, and the Upper Valley Medical Reserve Corps, which makes this training possible. For questions about this program, contact David Muse, Assistant Director of Emergency Management at David_Muse@uml.edu.

TILI TRAINING GRANT PROGRESS

Our unit was thrilled to receive notification on December 26 – three weeks early! – that we’d been awarded yet another grant from NACCHO (National Association of County and City Health Officials). Our application for an Operational Readiness Award (ORA) resulted in the top-level Tier 2 funding of \$10,000. According to the NACCHO MRC Team, “This funded award is intended to strengthen and sustain current capabilities for primary or evolving response missions.”



Clinical training included use of a BVM, packing a wound, and inserting airways.

Our proposal was to develop a cutting-edge disaster response curriculum for our volunteers who would be interested in taking on leadership roles. We are grateful to the staff at TILI – the MRC *Training, Innovation and Leadership Institute* – for providing our volunteers with weekend-long training opportunities at their stunning new high-tech facility in West Warwick, RI.



Leadership training discussed behavioral health, interactions with health technology, and volunteer engagement.

To capitalize on this option, TILI staff was able to invite members from additional MRC units across New England to participate in the training modules. The kickoff weekend (5PM Friday, Feb. 14 to 1PM Sunday, Feb. 16) provided Leadership skills. As of June 15, our members filled 11 spots in the Leadership class and 12 for Clinical training. Weekend seminars are scheduled through mid-August.

GRATITUDE FOR NACCHO!

For more than a decade, NACCHO has remained a phenomenal advocate for MRCs nationwide. The financial support alone for our unit has been invaluable. We’ve been awarded NACCHO grants annually: \$15,000 in 2015 (QPR mental health and Cut-It-Out domestic violence interventions), \$15,000 in 2016 (special needs preparedness), \$13,000 in 2017 (grooming leaders for all-hazards response), \$7500 in 2018 (community collaborations and partnerships), and \$10,000 every year thereafter when Operational Readiness Awards were offered. In 2022, RISE (Respond, Innovate, Sustain and Equip) funding gave us \$101,250 of sustainability funding. These grants were made possible through NACCHO’s cooperative agreement with the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response’s Office of the Medical Reserve Corps. We deeply appreciate NACCHO’s support in practical matters, financial contributions, and opportunities to attend conferences and assist with programming!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please contact the Coordinator at 978-399-2549 or NBurns@WestfordMA.gov to sign up for activities of interest. Also check email notices and the web site, www.UMVMRC.org, for updates.

I. Festivals and Service Opportunities – Volunteers at all levels are needed to cover shifts at these events. *Medical members*: especially for hypertension screening and first aid. *Non-medical members*: for preparedness and health initiatives. *All*: raise awareness of the MRC and offer community outreach.

Sat. Sept. 6: *Dracut Old Home Day*. Three shifts: 8 to 9 a.m. for set-up; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1 to 5 p.m. for staffing. High School Complex, 1580 Lakeview Ave, Dracut.

Sun. Sept. 14: *Live for Liv*. 8 to 11 a.m. and 11 to 2 p.m. at 4H Fairgrounds in Westford: first aid and general event support.

Sat. Sept. 27: *Chelmsford Fall Festival*. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Town Common; 3-hour shifts available. Seeking 10 volunteers to support the Health Dept. exhibit and family activities (petting zoo, bouncy house, pumpkin table, other). Same date for the Tyngsboro Fall Health and Safety Fair; logistics pending.

Sun. Oct. 19: *Bay State Marathon*. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Medical volunteers are asked to staff the triage tents at key locations in Lowell.

Sat. Oct. 26: *LASA Health Clinic*. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Medical volunteers are needed for intake and basic services, for area residents who have inadequate access to health care.

Thursdays Through 2025: *Veteran's BP Screening*. Chelmsford Senior Center, 75 Groton Road (Rt. 40), 8 to 10 a.m. last Thursday of the month at Veteran's breakfasts. Need two medical volunteers on each date; can sign up for one or several: July 31, August 28, Sept. 25, Oct. 30, Nov. 20, Dec. 18.

II. Flu Clinics – One of our signature activities is the support of inoculation clinics, primarily for influenza. These scheduled events help members get to know our community partners and each other, while practicing essential skills in an easygoing environment. Volunteers of all backgrounds are urged to participate. "Inoculators" are typically nurses who fill syringes and vaccinate. "Admins" are anyone willing to provide non-medical support, even medical members. Each town determines its clinic schedules throughout the fall, so more clinics will be added over time. Watch your emails for additions. The early dates that have been requested so far are as follows.

Lowell:

Fri. Oct. 10 – Seeking 5 inoculators and 2 admins at 8:30 a.m. for clinic from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Lowell City Hall (275 Merrimack St.).

Tues. Oct. 14 – Seeking 5 inoculators and 2 admins at 2 p.m. for clinic from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Lowell Health Department (107 Merrimack St.).

III. Classes – This August we are pleased to offer two educational events:

Basic Life Support – This American Heart Association course certifies MEDICAL participants in two years of advanced-level CPR/AED with choking relief. Training includes use of a bag-valve mask, pulse check, multiple-rescuer 'team dynamics' practice, and other skills for healthcare providers. Mon. Aug. 11, 5:30 to 9 p.m. at Millennium School, 23 Depot Street, Westford. Pre-registration required, as space is limited. Cost of materials is \$30, course itself is free.

Pets in Disaster – Specialists in animal care will address issues that can arise in shelters and related environments. Learn how to provide for your own pets in case of disaster, preventive measures to mitigate the impact of an evacuation, and concepts to support animals in emergencies. Weds. Aug. 13, 6 to 8 p.m., Fire Department Training Room, 65 Boston Road, Westford.



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HOSA HAPPENINGS

If the children are indeed our future, then the outlook is even brighter through our involvement with the teenagers in HOSA Future Health Professionals (formerly Health Occupation Students of America; see <https://hosa.org>). The UMV MRC has three long-standing partnerships with this organization.

1. We've continued to welcome HOSA students as youth members.
2. We've just held our second HOSA Heartsaver CPR 'mega-class' in two years.
3. The Westford Town Nurse and your Coordinator, plus a third UMV MRC member this year, are again chaperoning a large group of these students in a national academic competition – this time in Nashville.



The May 22 CPR class was a joy for both the students and instructors!