

HSPR's new state Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator and Oregon Health Authority/AmeriCorps VISTA Partnership Project Director: Eric Gebbie, Dr.P.H., M.I.A.



By Alyssa Bostian

With the new year comes a new Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Coordinator and Oregon Health Authority (OHA)/AmeriCorps VISTA Partnership Project Director. We are pleased to announce our own Dr. Eric N. Gebbie has filled the position, previously held by Akiko Saito.

Prior to obtaining his new title, Dr. Gebbie was employed by HSPR as the State Emergency Registry of Volunteers in Oregon (SERV-OR) Coordinator. Under his guidance, the registry grew rapidly and now many licensed healthcare professionals across the state are ready and able to respond in case of an emergency. Eric was integral in managing resources to provide numerous trainings on Basic and Advanced Disaster Life Support, Basic Burn Care, Disaster First Aid and more. These trainings were provided to SERV-OR volunteers at no cost, ensuring emergency responders are equipped with the skills needed to assist during any situation.

Eric has also been an integral part of HSPR's responses to events and exercises, taking an active role during H1N1, the Radiological Event from the tsunami in Japan, 2011 Winter Flooding and the PACE Setter Exercise in 2013. Eric's knowledge of preparedness and forward-thinking attitude was noticed during his tenure at HSPR.

Eric is quickly integrating into his new role and is off to a running start. His focus on streamlining, continuous quality improvement and vision for the future make him a great addition to both the MRC and VISTA projects. Within Eric's first month directing the VISTA project, he was involved with site visits, supervisor trainings, monthly report analysis and recruiting host sites for the 2014 Spring Team. Eric would like all VISTA members to have a positive experience and is quickly learning details about VISTA members, host sites and projects. Eric has sought out opportunities for professional development within the field of public health for VISTA members and is in the process of implementing a monthly webinar series for the team.

Eric's leadership skills have been a boon to the MRC project as well. Eric seamlessly stepped into the coordinator position, leading statewide MRC efforts and assisting all 18 MRC units in Oregon with continuing operations.

We are very excited to have Eric on board in this new position and are excited to see his accomplishments benefit Oregon and the HSPR program for years to come.

Fourth annual Benton County event provides resources for those in need



By Johanna Peerenboom

In its fourth year and under a new name, more than 100 individuals and families attended the Benton County Project Resource Connect this past November. The event's goal was to offer a one-stop spot for people who are homeless or living in a vulnerable situation to access essential services such as food, housing, medical care and dental work, as well as parenting programs and GED classes.

The event provided 58 health screenings, 40 people received dental services, 150 meals were served, 20 people received HIV/Hepatitis C tests, six applications were completed for Cover Oregon, and seven appointments made to complete the application at a future date.

I had the opportunity to work with the event planning committee made up of representatives from local non-profits and government agencies focused on alleviating poverty and assisting vulnerable populations in Benton County.

One of my major goals for this project was to work closely with the non-profit that will be taking control of the planning and coordination for future Project Resource Connect events in Benton County. I have worked to ensure a smooth transition and that forward progress is continued in the years to come. With a record number of participants this past year; we hope to continue to make this important event available and accessible to as many individuals and families as possible.

Using VISTA to clarify my professional goals



By Katie Rodriguez, AmeriCorps VISTA Marion County

I have had many great experiences as a result of my VISTA year. These experiences have helped mold my professional vision and future career path. Before starting VISTA, I had a certain vision of what public health embodied, and I now have a clearer and more precise idea of where my ambitions fall in that spectrum.

I have been introduced to a wide variety of health professionals and have gotten an insiders view of what they do every day.

I have had the great opportunity to experience many different settings that include: helping out with immunization and TB clinics at the county jail, farmworker housing, and local homeless shelters, writing policies, organizing outreach, and facilitating community-wide collaboration efforts.

I have enjoyed participating and becoming a part in helping out the local community. Meeting and creating relationships with the health professionals that are dedicated to this work has been invaluable. I have gained confidence in my abilities to take on the challenges that are presented to our communities on a daily basis.

Poverty is a vicious cycle that affects too many. Everyone deserves access to healthy opportunities. Through this experience I have learned that providing this access is not always easy, it takes a lot of dedication, ambition, and many, many willing individuals.

A look back at my VISTA year



By Kirstin Hoagland, Harney County VISTA

I didn't know what to expect my first VISTA year, but with only a few months left, I can say it has been an opportunity I will not forget. I am completing my service year in Harney County at the local health department. As a person who had never previously been to Oregon, Burns wasn't quite what I had imagined.

However, serving in a small, rural community, has allowed me to work with a wide range of community partners and residents, and has personally made me appreciate simplicity and the beauty of the great outdoors. My projects so far have included radon and arsenic testing, accreditation projects, positive youth events, and my favorite, the Harvest Share Project.

Harney County is considered a food desert. Some residents have to travel an hour or two to get to the nearest grocery store. The Harvest Share Project is through the Oregon Food Bank with Burns being served by the Southeast region in Ontario. Beginning this past summer, the Oregon Food Bank drove their distribution truck to Crane and Burns, delivering fresh fruits, vegetables and bread, monthly. This was free to everyone in the community; there were no income requirements or qualifications. When it began, only a few individuals showed up, but by fall, the parking lots were full in anticipation of the delivery. I would estimate approximately 50 or more families each month were benefiting from this project by the last distribution of the year.

Helping community members fill their bags with fresh produce, seeing their excitement and hearing their appreciation for this project was incredibly rewarding and humbling. The great news is the Oregon Food Bank plans on continuing this project in Harney County again in summer 2014!

Making a real difference in Wasco County



By Leela Patel

The Wasco County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) hosted its First Annual Winter Blanket Drive during December 2013 and January 2014.

To maximize the number of blankets collected while making the drive a team-building opportunity, the unit used two collection methods. First, MRC volunteers hung fliers and set up collection boxes around The Dalles, where community members could drop off their blankets. Second, the volunteers hosted a live blanket drop-off event on January 12, 2014.

The volunteers set up a stand in the parking lot of a local business, warmed up with coffee generously donated by a local coffee shop, and collected blankets from community members as they drove by.

In addition, volunteers gave out information about emergency preparedness and flu prevention flu during the drive. The drive was a great success. Approximately 50 blankets and other cold-weather items (hats, mittens, etc.) were collected. and donated to The Warming Place in The Dalles, Oregon, which opens on cold nights to provide warmth and shelter for the homeless. The group hopes to continue this tradition next year!

Working for Wellness in Washington County



By Marah Holland, AmeriCorps VISTA - Healthy People, Washington County DHHS

From Washington County, Rhode Island to Washington County, Oregon, this year with the AmeriCorps VISTA/OHA Partnership Program has brought many positive personal and professional opportunities for me. I started serving in April 2013 at my site, Washington

County Public Health, with the purpose of offering technical assistance to non-profits and school districts to develop worksite wellness programs for their employees.

I am excited to say that although progress has been slower than I anticipated, I have seen many projects flourish in the time I have been here. One project that I have been working on is capacity building for our on-site farmers' market. Some accomplishments include increased awareness of the market, development of product specific advertising, establishment of a graphic design and website dedicated to the market, creation of a farmers' market manual and application for vendors, and establishing the market as a resource for the Washington County Wellness Program.

A community project that I am excited about is the beginning of a wellness program at a partner non-profit, Adelante Mujeres. This organization is based in Forest Grove, Oregon, and works to educate and empower low-income Latina women and their families. They provide Latina women and their families with the tools to achieve self-determination in the areas of education and enterprise. I am hopeful that this program will eventually trickle down into the community to create a more cohesive, healthy, productive society.

Hopefully my last few months with the VISTA/OHA program will bring many more exciting project updates!

Expanding services in Central Oregon



Marina Rogers, AmeriCorps VISTA, Let's Talk Diversity Coalition

As an AmeriCorps VISTA serving with the Let's Talk Diversity Coalition, one of the Office of Equity and Inclusion's regional equity coalitions, I have been fortunate to participate in a variety of community projects. From engaging local high school students to partnering

with justice system personnel, it has been a privilege to be involved in a community that is striving towards more equitable systems for all residents.

In Jefferson County, we recognize that not all community members receive the same treatment or opportunities and this has resulted in health inequities. As a coalition, our goal is to create stronger communities where every person in the county and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs has the ability to achieve the highest level of health possible.

One of our current projects involves partnering with the Central Oregon Health Equity Task Force to gain input about local health care systems from community members in Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes counties. We will be hosting a multicultural storytelling project in the form of community forums and focus groups during the month of February. The Health Equity Task Force aims to better understand both the positive and negative experiences that our diverse community members encounter when they access local health care.

The Task Force hopes to hear specific community suggestions for improving language access, linguistically appropriate communications, patient engagement, provider and workforce competency, inclusive/welcoming environments and access to preventative care. Community suggestions and stories relating to these areas of health services will then be translated into recommendations for the Central Oregon Health Council and Central Oregon's CCO, PacificSource to improve health equity in our region. We hope to make a presentation to the council in June with specific recommendations both in writing and through videotaped stories from community members.

I am excited to be part of the Central Oregon Health Equity Task Force's work. I am also grateful to live in an area where health care leaders are working to recognize the community's knowledge, learn from the community's suggestions and empower community members who are often underrepresented in the discussion on health care transformation.

Teaching movement in Yamhill County



By Meghan Haggard

Beginning in late October, I taught a Walk with Ease class three days a week in Willamina. The classes ran for eight weeks and were held at the old high school building. The building is now called the West Valley Community Campus and a group of dedicated community members is working hard to rehabilitate the space as a community

meeting place with a focus on education, health and sustainability.

Walk with Ease is a program designed by the Arthritis Foundation to aid people who are living with arthritis become active or more active as a way of controlling their symptoms. The program covers various topics that relate to arthritis and had a stretching and walking component in each session. The five women who participated in the program all had various forms of arthritis and reported improvement in their stamina while exercising and increased flexibility.

Teaching the class was a highly enjoyable experience as the program also encourages socialization. I learned a lot from the women about their lives and what it had been like for them growing up as well as much about the area surrounding Willamina. The memories and lessons I learned from these women and the Walk with Ease program are one of the best things I have gained from my VISTA experience. I would highly recommend the program to anyone who has arthritis or anyone who just wants to get more active.

Building a strong MRC in Marion County



By Sophia Grimm

In January 2014, Marion County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) held three membership meetings for its current and prospective members. There are currently 990 MRC units that form a national network. Each unit is made up of local volunteers dedicated to promoting public health indicatives and augmenting health care staff during an

outbreak or patient surge.

Marion County MRC has offered monthly trainings, quarterly exercises and assorted skills classes to all of its members and other community partners over the past year. These trainings were offered to ensure that volunteers could respond safely and effectively during a crisis. The flurry of educational activities that took place increased the unit's membership from 15 to 65 volunteers in a mere 10 months.

Because volunteers joined at different times, this years membership meetings were designed so all volunteers knew the origins of the MRC, how funding is obtained, why having medical licenses credentialed prior to an emergency is important and what insurance and liability protection is available to MRC members. The meetings also provided a great opportunity for Marion County to praise MRC volunteers for all their hard work and dedication!

John Vanderzanden, Marion County's Emergency Manager said, "It is important for our members to understand different aspects of emergency preparedness and response, as well as their role within the MRC. Training as a unit and collaborating with other local emergency response partners helps build relationships and our understanding of joint agency capabilities."

Marion County MRC members include licensed medical professionals and other volunteers who are interested in developing skills, training together and planning for disaster medical response. To be eligible for a real life deployment, the unit's volunteers must attend a membership meeting every two years and a minimum of one quarterly exercise every year.

If you are interested in learning about and helping offer appropriate levels of health care response during a crisis, look up your local [MRC Unit](#).

Marion County MRC 2013 activities

Trainings	Skills classes	Exercises	Deployments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cascadia table top exercise Oregon crisis care guidance HAM radio for dummies Hazmat for health care workers Mass casualty incidents - Triage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient transfers Basic first aid Vital signs CPR/AED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CERT cache scavenger hunt Great Oregon steam-up Shelter/infirmary exercise with the American Red Cross and Linn and Yamhill MRC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warming tent for the homeless and displaced

Giving the gift of recess



By Zach Fund

Hello from Seaside, Oregon!

My AmeriCorps VISTA Year has been a great opportunity to encourage people to live healthier lifestyles. I have connected to others and feel I am able to make a difference through work site wellness, no matter how small or how meager the impact may seem. I have already accomplished a lot but I feel I have only scratched the surface. Every new project and idea keeps me excited and encourages me to keep going and improve health outcomes on the north Oregon coast.

Work site wellness has been a challenge in one of the rainiest places in Oregon, where grey sky and rain are the norm. To make things light and fun, I have adopted an employee recess program from a health department in California that can be done inside (or outside on a rare sunny day) in the middle of the workday.

I have named this project the Seaside Recess Project. You may be thinking recess is for kids, but think about how much we enjoyed recess as a kid and the benefits to our health from being able to play and be active during the school day. Can recess work for employees, for work sites, and communities? Yes! The point of Seaside recess is to bring out the inner kid in all of us and play during the day at work, during a meeting or lunch break.

This program is a way to a way to incorporate small bits of exercise in to the workday in a way that is accessible to all. The exercises are around 10 minutes, are simple and usually themed to a sport or a dance that has multiple parts. It is intended for all age and ability levels with the help of facilitators, who bring energy and are excited about the program. The feedback from the program has been very positive and request for more has been overwhelming. It is so great to see kids, the elderly, families and employees interact with a fun activity and get to enjoy the simple benefits of healthy activity.

Everyone deserves a recess!