

The MRC Reporter
Newsletter for the
Sonoma County Medical Reserve Corps
Volume 6, Issue 1
Spring 2009

MRC Program Updates:

Greetings to all!

As the MRC enters its sixth year, we are facing some new challenges. Due to a reduction in the grant funding which supports the County's Public Health Preparedness Unit, of which this MRC is a part, my position as the Coordinator of the MRC will be eliminated effective March 1st. My last day in this position is Monday, February 23rd. I will still be with Public Health, but, will be working in another capacity. It has been a wonderful journey – meeting all of you, working with you at our trainings, exercises, drills, and flu shot clinics, and getting to know you. I am constantly amazed at how generous you all are with sharing your time and expertise with us and ultimately, with our community. I will miss you all!!

Ann Baechler, RN, our Public Health Preparedness nurse, will be the new MRC coordinator once I depart. She has been an integral part of the MRC since its inception in the fall of 2003. Many of you already know Ann. Over the past six years, she has been one of our main presenters at the new volunteer orientation that you were required to attend, teaching you about your roles and responsibilities as an MRC volunteer. Additionally, many of you have worked with Ann on the *Hand Hygiene Program* or at the Santa Rosa Wednesday Night Markets public health booth. You will be in good hands with Ann! You can reach her at 707-565-4579 or email her at DHS-MRC@sonoma-county.org.

I wish to thank you all for responding to the MRC Skills Survey, either online or by mail. We now have accurate and up-to-date contact and skills information that will help us better utilize your skills and abilities in a public health emergency. As a result of this survey we now are a smaller, but, fully committed MRC. We now have **312 health professionals** (37 physicians, 18 pharmacists, 210 RNs, 22 FNPs, 23 LVNs, 1 EMT, 1 respiratory therapist); **48 mental health professionals** (8 LCSWs, 23 MFTs, 14 psychiatric technicians, 3 psychologists); and **41 support staff** -- a grand total of **401 MRC volunteers**.

Lastly, I want to thank all of you who were able to participate in some or all of our activities last fall: the November 1st POD training, the December 6th flu shot clinics and POD exercise. There will continue to be activities in which you will be able to participate this spring. For example, the upcoming March 19th Bay Area Mass Dispensing Site/POD exercise in Alameda County.

Once again, we here at Public Health thank you for all that you have done in the last year that continues to make this a great MRC program.

This isn't goodbye, just farewell!

Regards,
Gabrielle Trubach, MA
MRC Coordinator

Message from the (new) Deputy Health Officer:

Hello Everyone,

By now many of you are aware that Dr. Leigh Hall retired in July 2008. I am Dr. Mark Netherda and I have the good fortune of being the new Deputy Public Health Officer for the County of Sonoma, overseeing our Public Health Preparedness Program. I'm a native of northern California and, like Dr. Hall, trained in Family Medicine. Just prior to taking this position, I was a Public Health physician for Sonoma County and prior to that I was the Medical Director of the Center for HIV Prevention and Care for 12 years. I am very happy to be working in my new position and am equally excited about getting to know the folks in the MRC. I look forward to working with you at our trainings and exercises and welcome your feedback and any ideas you have about the MRC. Please, feel free to contact me at mnetherd@sonoma-county.org.

As you know, the Public Health Preparedness program is responsible for planning for the provision of an appropriate response to virtually any event with the potential to impact the health and well-being of the people of Sonoma County – everything from earthquakes to biological warfare. All County employees are designated as Disaster Service Workers and will be called upon to respond in the event of such an emergency, but even with the large number of individuals employed by the County, we may not have enough skilled and trained personnel to respond to a major public health emergency. Frankly, we couldn't do our job without you all. While you each bring special skills to our team, perhaps most importantly, you also bring tremendous experience and a sense of selflessness as volunteers which cannot be taught or trained. Thank you all very much for your dedication and sacrifice.

From what I hear from other counties and the State, the County of Sonoma MRC is one of the most active and robust medical volunteer preparedness programs in California, if not the nation. We now have 401 wonderfully diverse and active members of the Corps. Unfortunately, as Gabrielle has told you in her MRC Program Updates column, the Public Health Preparedness program has not been immune to local, state or federal budget reductions. We have been forced to make cuts and are being asked to do more with less funding. Gabrielle has been a real champion of the MRC, providing tremendous vision and program administration; although she is moving to another program within the Department of Health Services, the MRC program will continue under your new coordinator, Ann Baechler, RN. I want to thank Gabrielle for the wonderful work she has done with our MRC and for all people living in Sonoma County. She will be missed by us all.

Cheers,
Mark Netherda, MD
Deputy Public Health Officer
County of Sonoma