

## **ALABAMA**

### **Highlights of State Council Activities**

Alabama Citizen Corps, coordinated through the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, was established by Executive Order on December 10, 2003 for the purpose of uniting state and local leaders to strengthen communities and prepare individuals to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime and disasters. In addition, Alabama Citizen Corps addresses the state's all-hazards preparedness initiatives by inclusion in Alabama's State Homeland Security Strategy, Emergency Operations Plan, and a Proclamation by Governor Riley.

The Alabama Citizen Corps Council is comprised of key representatives from both state and local organizations. Membership includes the Alabama State Police, Fire Chiefs Association, local emergency managers, the Corporation for National and Community Service program partners, American Red Cross, Association of Chiefs of Police, Department of Education, representatives from county and municipal government, county law enforcement, Alabama Sheriffs Association, Alabama State Defense Force, and local volunteers. Leadership of the Council is provided by the Director of the Alabama Department of Homeland Security, the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and the Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

State and local Citizen Corps Councils foster partnerships with various agencies, such as Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC), Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRC), Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), National Service partners (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, etc), as well as faith-based and community organizations.

Funding sources for Alabama Citizen Corps include both Citizen Corps Program and State Homeland Security Program (SHSP). Over \$600,000 in SHSP funding was earmarked for Citizen Preparedness in FY05 allowing existing and emerging Councils to expand their outreach and training capabilities. Additional funds were leveraged from the Corporation for National and Community Service, Home Depot, State of Alabama, and Singing for Change Foundation to support Citizen Preparedness in conjunction with local Citizen Corps Councils.

Citizen Corps and SHSP funds are competitively awarded to local Councils via a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to ensure local Councils have a community preparedness plan in place prior to receiving funding and to promote local innovation and regional collaboration.

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#### **Public Education and Outreach**

In October, the Chilton County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and Citizen Corps Council jointly sponsored a week-long disaster and severe weather promotion at Clanton Intermediate School. Students toured a tornado simulation trailer provided by the Collins Chapel

Fire Department and the Council distributed promotional T-shirts and water bottles. A disaster preparedness poster contest was held with a cash prize for the top three submissions. Approximately 150 students entered the contest by creating their own family disaster plan in order to be eligible to submit their poster.

### **Training and Exercises**

In December, the Second Annual Citizen Corps Conference was held in Florence, Alabama, with over 120 attendees representing all regions of the state. Attendees were able to practice newly learned skills during an exercise to simulate setting up a Volunteer Reception Center in the ballroom of the hotel.

In partnership with local Citizen Corps Councils, and sponsored by the City of Chelsea and the Shelby County Sheriff's Office, Chelsea Citizen Observer Patrol (COP) program, an all-volunteer organization, trains Chelsea citizens to patrol neighborhoods and business areas in the town to help deter crime and to assist in emergencies. The dynamic group meets monthly to enforce ongoing security patrol and complete Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

### **Volunteer Programs and Support**

In Alabama, all AmeriCorps state-funded projects are required to provide CERT training to at least 25 percent of their staff. Through this process, AmeriCorps members learn about the importance of preparedness both at work and at home while collaborating with local emergency officials.

In November 2005, the Alabama Disaster Response and Recovery Team was created through a partnership between the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives as a response to Hurricane Katrina. This team, comprised of eight AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) members and one VISTA leader, coordinates recovery efforts in Alabama while helping the state prepare for future disasters. Members serve in one of four project areas and participants in each area collaborate with local Citizen Corps Councils to engage interested parties in Interfaith Disaster Network, Volunteer and Donations Coordination Center, Citizen Preparedness and Outreach, and Homelessness and Evacuee Issues.

### **Support for Hurricane Katrina Response**

Alabama Citizen Corps volunteers assisted in the state and local emergency operations centers, staffed and coordinated extensive shelter operations and phone banks, received donations at collection points, stocked warehouses, and distributed goods at churches in affected areas, distributed ice and food, provided traffic control, performed community patrols, and assisted at Disaster Recovery Centers. The First Baptist Level Plains CERT program coordinated local collection activities by gathering much needed items for hurricane victims. In Jefferson County, CERT trained AmeriCorps members to aid in the volunteer management function at a local Disaster Recovery Center.

### **National Preparedness Month**

Preparedness Day was hosted by Marshall County Citizen Corps, Emergency Management Agency, and Wal-Mart Supercenter. In a unique partnership, representatives from both organizations provided displays in the parking lot and local law enforcement agencies discussed the Neighborhood Watch Program with interested patrons while the volunteer fire department promoted volunteerism in fire service. EMA representatives distributed hundreds of pamphlets on Citizen Corps, CERT, and family disaster preparedness and planning. Amateur radio operators familiar with storm spotting were available to foster interest in ham radio.