



## **Citizen Corps Celebrates Fourth Anniversary Accomplishments**

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Washington, DC – Four years since President George W. Bush launched USA Freedom Corps through his Call to Service, Citizen Corps celebrates progress in improving community resiliency through citizen preparedness and participation. Nearly 2,000 communities, encompassing 70 percent of the U.S. population, have established Citizen Corps Councils to strengthen collaboration between local governments, emergency service providers, and the public. These local Councils engage citizens in local emergency plans, training, and exercises and coordinate opportunities for citizen volunteers to participate in making our communities safer. All fifty-six state and territory governments support local Citizen Corps efforts.

"Citizen Corps is a critical component of our work to prepare the homeland by getting citizens prepared, trained and involved," said Tracy Henke, Executive Director of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Grants and Training, and Chair of the National Citizen Corps Council. "Through the Homeland Security Grant Program, we are working with state, local and tribal governments across the country to ensure that every American, every home, every community, and every state is better prepared for all emergencies."

One person who answered the President's call is Terri Shamlian of Harris County, Texas. In 2003, Ms. Shamlian joined the Harris County Citizen Corps and began volunteering to help make her community safer. She then completed Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training as a member of the first high-rise CERT team in downtown Houston and, as a CERT Coordinator, began helping others become trained in CERT.

When 65,000 evacuees came to Houston following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, Ms. Shamlian used her training to be an effective volunteer for the Katrina Relief efforts at the Astrodome Reliant Center. Volunteering 113 hours during the two-week operation, Ms. Shamlian helped manage more than 60,000 fellow volunteers. Around the country, 14,000 Citizen Corps volunteers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia were actively involved in Katrina response and recovery efforts.

"Safety and security are the central issues of our day," said Ms. Shamlian, "Citizen Corps offers an organized way for people to get connected to their local emergency response structure, to get training, and to make a difference in the community." In recognition of



*DHS Executive Director, Office of Grants and Training Tracy Henke and Teri Shamlian, Citizen Corps volunteer from Harris County, TX*



her service, Ms. Shamlian was invited to join First Lady Laura Bush during the 2006 State of the Union address.

Citizen Corps and the DHS Ready Campaign work to educate citizens on emergency preparedness measures, including supplying emergency kits and developing a family communications plan. State and Local Citizen Corps Councils localize the personal preparedness message and offer training and volunteer service opportunities to support local first responders. Since the creation of Citizen Corps in January 2002, DHS has worked in close collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the fire service community to develop programs that provide an integrated approach to citizen participation.

- There are over 2,000 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs across the country that offer 20 hours of hand-on instruction for citizens in emergency preparedness, disaster medical operations, fire safety, and basic search and rescue. CERT is administered by DHS;
- The HHS Medical Reserve Corps Program has more than 350 Units around the country that engage citizen volunteer physicians, nurses, pharmacists and others with an interest in a broad range of skills in medicine, public health and other support fields;
- Funded by DOJ and administered by the National Sheriffs Association, the National Neighborhood Watch Program has registered over 14,000 Watch Programs, many with a revitalized mission to include neighborhood emergency preparedness;
- Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) has grown to more than 1,300 registered programs participating in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The International Association of Chiefs of Police administers VIPS with funding from DOJ; and
- Fire Corps, started in December 2004, has nearly 400 registered programs. Fire Corps is a collaborative effort of the DHS U.S. Fire Administration, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the International Association of Fire Fighters, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

In addition, Citizen Corps has 25 National Citizen Corps Affiliates that support the mission with public education and outreach materials, training programs, and volunteer opportunities to support family and community safety.

“Through Citizen Corps, we are building a grass-roots culture of citizen preparedness. It is critical that the public be prepared and work with their neighborhoods and communities to do the same,” said Henke.



To find out more about Citizen Corps and to locate the Council nearest you, visit [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov). For more information on the Ready campaign, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).