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## SANTA ROSA COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS RECEIVES 2015-2016 MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS CHALLENGE AWARD



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**Milton, FL** – The Santa Rosa County Medical Reserve Corps is a recipient of the 2015-2016 Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Challenge Award from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). The \$15,000 award will be used to develop the Santa Rosa Disaster Relief Academy, a training curriculum for volunteers within the faith-based community. The goal is to use the curriculum to conduct outreach to faith-based organizations to help them establish disaster ministries/safety teams.

“The primary objective for the program is to assist faith-based organizations in standing up disaster strike teams and training the volunteers on those teams,” said Stephen Samaha, MRC coordinator for Santa Rosa County, “but we will also provide higher-level disaster response training to our existing volunteers and monthly continuing education training for volunteer response groups throughout the community. This program is a means of uniting all of the various volunteer groups within our community for a more coordinated response and recovery effort.”

To develop the curriculum, Samaha and his team researched existing programs to ensure they would not be duplicating the efforts of other groups. The structure of the Disaster Relief Academy is a modular format providing multiple training options to suit the needs of the community and will allow faith-based organizations to operate independently as well as part of a collaborative effort. The concept also will allow other MRC units to easily replicate the idea and grow the academy throughout the U.S. and provide a pool of potential recruits for MRC.

Santa Rosa County Medical Reserve Core Unit 556 was established in 2006. MRC works closely with the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County and other community partners to provide preparedness education, assist with Points of Distributing and other Public Health Preparedness activities. For more information, visit the DOH-Santa Rosa web site at <http://santarosa.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-preparedness-and-response/medical-reserve-corps/index.html> and the national MRC website at <https://medicalreservecorps.gov/MrcUnits/UnitDetails/556>.

The Florida Department of Health is the first accredited public health department system in the U.S.

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