

# The Heart Line: Taking the Pulse

Covering Volunteerism and Service Throughout the Commonwealth

September 2009 Edition

## Welcome

Welcome to the September edition of the Heart Line newsletter, a publication by the Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service (KCCVS).

The 2009-10 AmeriCorps programs began this month and we are gearing up for the AmeriCorps Launch, the program year kick-off and training event for AmeriCorps members.

This edition is full of stories from many types of national service, as well as stories to inspire you and help you to be prepared. One story not included is information about the upcoming Make A Difference Day on Oct. 24, but don't worry, we will let you know all about our plans as soon as they are finalized.

Also, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions about any of our community service programs, such as AmeriCorps, the Governor's Volunteer Awards, the Volunteer Insurance Program, or the Volunteer Recognition Program.

## AmeriCorps NCCC Serves in Kentucky

*By Shannon Ramsey, KCCVS Media and Publications Specialist*



NCCC Team River One with Betsy Wells and Sister Andi Sieloff

An AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team served in Kentucky, helping with recovery from the August flood in Louisville. The 11-member team, River One, were in Louisville from Sept. 2-15 removing debris from homes, removing walls and floors when necessary and cleaning and sanitizing dwellings.

The Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) project was one of 14 projects launched from the new NCCC Southern Region campus in Vicksburg, Miss. The other 13 projects stayed in Mississippi, focusing on recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina and other community needs.

On Sept. 14, Sister Andi Sieloff, program officer for the Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service, and Betsy Wells, Kentucky state director for the Corporation for National and Community Service and KCCVS commission ex-officio member, presented the team with certificates signed by Governor Steve Beshear.

Sieloff and Wells were able to talk with the River One team about some of the "aha" and "yuck" moments of their service assignment. Many of the members "aha" moments came from interaction and conversations with homeowners.

"They all were affected by the flood differently, yet they were all so



Betsy Wells presents Grace Wallace with her certificate

grateful of our help,” team member Kellie Goebel said. “Seeing the tears in the homeowners’ eyes from the pain of losing personal items in the flood turn into tears of joy and relief that their homes were finally clean is something I will never forget!”

Many of the team’s “yuck” moments revolved around dealing with sewage and one memorable moment of discovering a prosthetic leg wrapped in a bundle of blankets while disposing of refuse.

After a few days, the River One team split into groups and worked a few projects independently. But on Saturday, the full team re-formed to work on a project.



Team Leader Sanjoy Paul

“The project was a challenge and the members became discouraged, but we revised our strategy and worked as a strong team,” Team Leader Sanjoy Paul said.

“When we were working on the assembly line, I realized how much more effective it is to have people supporting you than working alone,” team member Richard Coss said.

AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time, team-based residential program for men and women ages 18-24. NCCC members are organized into teams of 10 to 12 members and serve in the region’s local communities by responding to needs in the areas of: disaster preparation, response and recovery; environmental conservation; public safety; urban and rural development; and education. Corps members respond to disasters, construct homes,

develop trails in state and national parks, mentor children and youth and meet many other needs identified by communities.

Kentucky is grateful for the service of the NCCC team and would welcome them back anytime.

Learn more about AmeriCorps NCCC at <http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/nccc.asp>.

Read the press release about the Southern Region NCCC campus at [http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases\\_detail.asp?tbl\\_pr\\_id=1497](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=1497) (Sept. 1, 2009).

## Paducah's Project United

*By Mallory Hely, AmeriCorps VISTA*



On our first National Day of Service, the United Way of Paducah-McCracken County commemorated this milestone by organizing Project United -- a half-day of volunteerism for over 20 local businesses and organizations. Volunteers arrived at Paducah’s Noble Park the morning of Friday, Sept. 11, and were sent off to 12 of the United Way’s partner agencies to complete tasks such as organizing donations, painting and landscaping.

Paducah’s local Senior Citizen Center organized one of the largest projects. More than 20 businesspeople pulled together to paint the home of Tina Lofton, and in less than two hours her home had a completely new look. She explained to WPSD-TV reporter Jennifer Horbelt, “I really appreciate what they’re doing.”

Businesses were not only willing to give up a half-day’s time, but other resources as well. Paducah’s

James Sanders Nursery donated materials and expertise to better the look of Paducah Day Nursery, an organization that provides discounted day care to low income families. As the playground was nearly finished, director Cindy Barletto told The Paducah Sun, "We feel like it's 'Extreme Home Makeover.' "

Local concrete company Federal Materials also contributed to the day's success. Their team donated gravel and their time to create a new parking area for the Paducah Area Sexual Assault Center.

In total, approximately 150 volunteers spent their morning working around the community and then returned to Noble Park to enjoy a free lunch and speak with others about their experiences at the agencies. This event marked the kickoff of the United Way of Paducah-McCracken County's annual campaign and was their first ever Project United.

Executive Director Ashley Wright said, "Project United was a great success on many levels. Not only did we accomplish a number of projects that our Partner Agencies would not have had the time or money to do otherwise, it also exposed the volunteers to the needs in our community and gave them a tangible way to help. We look forward to next year's Project United and expect an even bigger turnout."



## Disabilities Corner: Molly the Pony

By Lanny Taulbee, KCCVS Disabilities Coordinator



Lanny Taulbee with Molly the Pony

For the past two years there has been a photograph of a small pony on my cubicle wall. I placed it there hoping that others would take notice and spread the word about the tragedies and triumphs of Molly the Pony with the prosthetic leg.

The small pony, whose story has inspired me and so many others, has been recognized for her courage and determination to survive whatever comes her way.

When I first learned that the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games will be held in Kentucky in 2010, I immediately thought it would be a great idea if Molly could serve as an official equine ambassador representing disabilities inclusion on an international level. I began spreading the word about Molly the Pony hoping that this suggestion would reach those that could make it happen.

Molly's extraordinary story began during hurricane Katrina when she became stranded in a partially collapsed barn in southern Louisiana. The owners had left plenty of feed and water expecting to return in a few days, but the severity of the storm prevented them from returning.

After being trapped for over a week, Molly was finally rescued on Sept. 6. She was taken to Pony Paradise, a small farm owned by Kaye Harris and used as a rescue facility for Hurricane Katrina animal victims.

This could have been the end of the story with Molly living out her days happily ever after at Pony Paradise, but that was not to be the case. One day, Molly and the other ponies were attacked by a pit bull terrier. Molly soon recovered from most of her wounds, but her right-front leg did not heal. She would either lose her leg or lose her life. Ms. Kaye, as friends call her, and Molly again were poised to share an unexpected journey. To survive, Molly would have to undergo a rare surgical procedure for horses, amputation of her front leg.



Photo by Pam Kaster

The procedure took place on Jan. 16, 2006, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a special day for those of us involved in national service and community volunteerism. For us it is a chance for everyone to volunteer one day of their time and expertise to meet the challenges of their community. While most businesses were closed for the holiday, a dedicated medical team and volunteers gathered at Louisiana State University in an attempt to save the life of the little pony who had already touched so many hearts with her will to survive.

Now, Ms. Kaye and Molly have a new mission in life. They travel as much as possible visiting children's hospital, rehabilitation centers, senior centers and other events. They spread hope to those who have lost so much either by disease or circumstance.

No less important to the survival and success of Molly is her human companion, Ms. Kaye. Without her belief in the rights of all living things to live out their lives as best as possible, Molly's story would have come to an abrupt end a long time ago. The dedication and devotion that Ms. Kaye has shown to Molly and the other animals at Pony Paradise make them a team for life. It takes a lot of personal sacrifice

and willingness to risk everything, both emotionally and financially, to care for a loved one with a disability. The same is true for adopting a pony with special needs and extraordinary medical expenses.

In August, Molly and Ms. Kaye visited the Kentucky Horse Park. I heard about their visit just in time to go see them. As we talked, I could not help but notice a small sign on the table with Molly's name and the universal symbol of accessibility, or was it? Upon closer inspection the symbol had been altered. The wheelchair symbol actually had a pony sitting in the wheelchair!



Ms. Kaye and I talked about life's challenges and the special people that devote their lives so others with special needs can attain their goals in life. For many people with severe disabilities, their success is dependent on a parent, a sibling or other loved one who has devoted time and energy to ensure that the individual reaches their maximum potential, just like Ms. Kaye has done for Molly. I know because I am one of those people who could not have realized my dreams without the help of countless individuals throughout my lifetime. Molly did not choose to become a symbol of hope for others. It just happened by a series of circumstances.

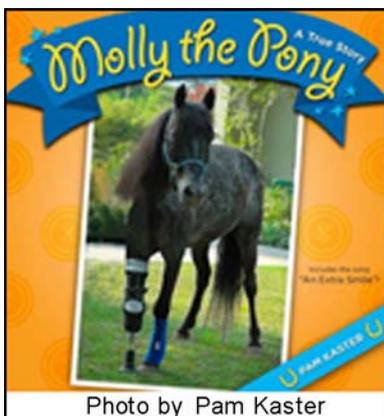


Photo by Pam Kaster

And speaking of making dreams come true, I just learned that Molly the Pony and Ms. Kaye will indeed participate in the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) in 2010 as part of the Equine Village. Molly will be one of the spectators at the Para-Equestrian (riders with disabilities) Competition! The WEG anticipates there will be in excess of 600,000 spectators, plus exhibitors from 60 countries. That will be a lot of hope and education to spread across the world.

Kids and Ponies - Molly's Foundation was established to accept donations to care for Molly and other retirees or rescued ponies, her mission to work with those who need her inspiration, and to administer educational programs for children using ponies. A book featuring Molly and her journey has also been published. If you would like more information about Molly, her foundation, or about the book, go to [www.mollythepony.com](http://www.mollythepony.com).

## Crisis Communication Plan

By Melissa Newton, KCCVS Training Officer

### September is National Preparedness Month: Do you have a crisis communication plan?



We all know that planning and preparation are the keys to surviving a crisis and hopefully we all have our plans in place at work and at home. But do you have a crisis communication plan for your volunteer program? What if your agency is damaged or destroyed in a fire? What if your area floods? What about storm damage and power outages? Whatever the disaster may be, your volunteers and other stakeholders will be looking to you for information.

There are many reasons to develop a crisis communication plan for your organization. First, it helps prepare staff to communicate in a unified and professional manner. Secondly, you will be able to manage the distribution of critical and sensitive information to the media, the public and your stakeholders. And it will position the organization to continue to uphold the mission when things are difficult.

Here is an overview of some of the steps you can take in preparing for the crisis before it happens:

- Create a phone/e-mail list of staff and board members. Update this list quarterly or as needed.
- Identify and train organization spokespeople. It is easier to keep a consistent message when the same people are giving the message. Make sure the entire staff knows who these spokespeople are so they can refer any media contacts to them.
- Create a crisis management checklist and distribute to all staff.
- Create and keep a contact list for key audiences so they can be reached easily in a crisis. Review and update on a regular basis.
- Create responses for common media questions and make sure all spokespeople are familiar. Review and update on a regular basis.
- Maintain contact information for police, fire, hospital, health departments, utilities and paramedics. Make sure staff knows how to access the information.
- Determine a location off-site to convene and/or from which to stage communications if the situation prevents staff from getting to the office.
- Identify resources necessary prior to a crisis including extra cell phones, computers, etc. Determine how these would be used and who would be responsible for getting them all together.
- Review and practice the crisis communication plan on a regular basis.

Here is an overview of some of the steps you would need to put your crisis communication plan into action:

- Ensure all staff are safe and contact 911 if necessary.
- Notify the CEO and president immediately.
- Convene the crisis response team to review the situation and determine the facts.

Before going public:

- Choose a lead communication person who is responsible for ensuring all tasks are completed.
- Choose the spokesperson who will answer media and other inquiries.
- Create a plan of action for internal and external communications.
- Develop a message that reflects only the facts and status of the crisis, the organizations response to the crisis and what steps are being taken to mitigate the negative impact of the crisis.
- Prepare talking points and a script for the reception taking incoming calls.
- Determine if a press release, Web and/or voicemail updates are needed.

Going public:

- Place calls to critical internal audiences such as staff, board members, and legislators.
- Reach out to the media with a press release.

- Update Web site and organizations phone messages.
- Update key audiences with ongoing information.

Once the crisis has past, review the plan and how well it worked. Make any changes to the plan so the next time around you will be even more prepared to communicate during a crisis.

What types of crisis plans do you have in place in your volunteer program?

## AmeriCorps Grant boosts services to seniors

*By Rich Suwanski, Messenger-Inquirer  
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### Local chapter received \$252,000 from state

Dorothy Alexander felt she was chained to a desk in her former job as an AT&T information specialist. As an AmeriCorps member working at the Elizabeth Munday Senior Center, Alexander still helps people, but she's not desk-bound. Not by a long shot.

"Sitting at a desk wasn't for me," said Alexander, 39. "I'm a people person, and I like visiting seniors, delivering Meals on Wheels ... anything under the sun that needs doing."

On Tuesday, Alexander was one of 20 people beginning Senior Connections, an AmeriCorps program whose members work at nonprofit or public agencies that provide services to senior citizens.

"When someone signs up to be in the AmeriCorps program, they agree to serve 1,700 hours of community service over a year, which is roughly the equivalent of a full-time job," said Dave Clark, the AmeriCorps program director at Green River Area Development District.

Members get an \$11,400 living allowance, free health insurance and an education award of \$4,725 at the completion of one year of service. The benefits package is about \$18,000. Members are in the program no more than two years.

Alexander, 39, wants to use the education money toward becoming an occupational therapist or medical technician. When Alexander goes to work now, she's prepared for anything.

"I love meeting people and seeing what I can do to help seniors," she said. "I wanted to do something to give back to the community."

In last year's program, Alexander ran errands, visited seniors for companionship and shopped for them, did light housecleaning and performed offices duties at the Munday Center.

"Dave Clark gave us the right person for the job," said Tom Vittitow, the executive director of the Munday Center. "She does anything and everything. We have seniors in their 80s and 90s, and Dottie will look in on them.

"Sometimes (people from the Munday Center) are the only people our seniors will see, and they want somebody to talk to. Dottie will spend 30 or 45 minutes with them."

Senior Connections placed AmeriCorps members in such locations as the Housing Authority of Owensboro, Hospice of the Ohio Valley, the Career Center and the Whitesville Senior Citizen Center.

The local chapter of AmeriCorps received a \$252,000 one year grant from its parent organization, the



Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service.

The program is open to high school graduates who have a history of community service, have reliable transportation, a willingness to serve and a positive attitude. Clark said about 60 people applied for the 20 slots. Thirteen were new enrollees, while seven began their second year. AmeriCorps has 42 members locally, 70,000 nationally and plans to have 250,000 by 2017, Clark said.

"Over the years, more people have become aware of the program, and we expect it to grow," Clark said. "And we already have a waiting list of nonprofits and public agencies."

Agencies receiving members foot about half the cost of the living expenses, or salary. In the Munday Center's case, Daviess Fiscal Court sponsors its half, so it gets a full-time worker at no cost.

Anyone interested in applying for AmeriCorps membership can get more information online at [www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov).

Clark said he'll be applying for more grants this fall and expects the Homeland Security Citizen Corps to have openings at the next recruiting effort in March 2010.

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"...there is no other solution to a man's problems but the day's honest work, the day's honest decisions, the day's generous utterance, and the day's good deed."

- Clare Boothe Luce, American playwright and diplomat (1903-1987)

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