

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR OUR FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Governor's Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives

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The Alabama Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) was designed to serve as a bridge between local communities and government. The GFBCI works to help faith and community-based organizations become better prepared to access state and federal grants that are available to them, as well as connect people with volunteer opportunities through AmeriCorps, Citizen Corps, and other citizen service initiatives.

Curious about training and funding opportunities?

Sign up for the Faith and Community-Based Loop!

To receive bi-weekly updates on the latest information regarding capacity building, grants, and funding opportunities for faith-based and community organizations, please go to www.ServeAlabama.gov, click on the [Faith and Community-Based Loop](#) link to sign up.

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Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Update!

- One Commerce Street, Suite 620 in Montgomery became the new home of the GFBCI in late May. For more information on the work and programs of the GFBCI, visit the website at www.ServeAlabama.gov.
- In April, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives was pleased to welcome Matt Nettleton who became the newest addition to the VISTA Disaster Response and Recovery Team. A graduate of Wesleyan University, Matt hails from Stratford, CT. Matt will focus much of his time on the creation of Be Ready Business- a campaign to encourage businesses in Alabama to prepare for disasters.



The Second Annual Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Conference: *Empowering Local Alliances Active in Disaster*

The Second Annual Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (ALVOAD) Conference was held on Tuesday, May 22, 2007, in Montgomery. The conference entitled "Empowering Local Alliances Active in Disaster", was a partnership between ALVOAD, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI), and the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). The event served as a forum for members from local and state organizations and government that work in all phases of disaster.

Becky Booker, President of ALVOAD opened the day with a welcome and Sydney Hoffman, Executive Director of the GFBCI, presented on Volunteerism in Alabama. Jim Walker, Director of the Alabama Department of Homeland Security, provided a presentation on preparedness in Alabama. Following Mr. Walker was a presentation on the pandemic flu by Dr. Don Williamson, State Health Officer, Alabama Department of Public Health. Ken Skalitzky, FEMA Region 4 Volunteer Agency Liaison, wrapped up the first half of the conference by speaking on "The Volunteer Response to the March 1st Tornadoes".



James R. Mullins of the GFBCI leads a break-out session on Aidmatrix.



Bruce Baughman, Director, Alabama Emergency Management Agency

The second half of the day gave attendees the opportunity to participate in various break-out sessions. Topics spanned from an introduction to Aidmatrix, a new web-based volunteer and donations system, and volunteer reception centers to a VOAD/Citizen Corps panel which discussed collaboration on the state and local level. The day concluded with Bruce Baughman, Director of AEMA, speaking on Emergency Management in Alabama. Clyde Pressley, Vice President of ALVOAD, made a special presentation on behalf of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster to Sheila McFerran, Executive Director of the Volunteer Center of Madison County for her work in response to Hurricane Katrina.

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Sheila McFerran, Executive Director, Volunteer Center of Madison County, and Clyde Pressley, Vice President, ALVOAD

Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness



Council Holds Second Quarter Meeting

In early June, the Council members met and made significant progress toward achieving its 2007 goals. To give Alabama's academic community the opportunity to share emerging research on homelessness, the Council approved the creation of an academic advisory group. The Council will invite leading scholars in the area of homelessness from universities across the state to serve on the advisory group. The Council also reviewed progress on its bold data-based collection. To continue its work on developing a statewide data report on homelessness, the Council strengthened its Data and Public Outreach/Education working groups, tasking them to assist the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) in the development and dissemination of its 2007 data report. Qualitative data, the Council agreed at its first 2007 meeting, is an important part of homelessness data. As a result, the Council asked the GFBCI to conduct focus groups with presently and previously homeless individuals across the state to gather anecdotal data on homelessness in Alabama. At its second quarter meeting, AmeriCorps*VISTA members Ginger Norling and Jariel Rendell reported their progress on this effort. The article below describes the focus groups in greater depth.

Homelessness Focus Groups

Beginning in early May, GFBCI AmeriCorps*VISTA members Ginger Norling and Jariel Rendell visited homeless service providers across Alabama to listen to the stories of Alabama's homeless citizens. Groups of homeless people from a variety of backgrounds, including domestic violence victims, chronically homeless individuals, and homeless youth, responded to a series of broad questions about the experience of homelessness in Alabama and about strategies for helping people who are homeless. The questions were designed to be broad enough to foster wide-ranging discussion on the issue and also to invite focus group participants to share their own stories and experiences. The box on the right gives one man's story.

A Story of Homelessness

I came from a nice family. My dad was a pastor and we didn't have a lot but we always had what we needed. I went to college, but I got into drugs and alcohol. I ended up in Dothan, which is far from where I used to live, with nothing because I had to have the dope. I was walking around barefooted because the only shoes I had were flip-flops, but they broke. The people in the neighborhood called me the "white boy who sold his truck for dope." After a while, I got into this program, which has helped me get clean and given me a place to stay.

Spotlight on Data

The Council has identified data on the unhoused as one of Alabama's most pressing needs related to homelessness. A Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded statewide homeless management information system (HMIS) will play a vital role in satisfying that need. During the last quarter, Alabama's HMIS steering committee made significant progress in its effort to develop a statewide HMIS. Notably, the committee agreed on a new name for its system: *promis.AL*. The committee also moved closer to adopting a uniform set of statewide data standards.



AmeriCorps in Alabama

The GFBCI monitors the programs as the Alabama State Service Commission for AmeriCorps. Alabama's State programs focus on mentoring and tutoring students of all ages, bridging the digital divide in rural areas, preparing and responding to disasters, helping children and parents prepare for school, working with at-risk youth and their families, and assisting individuals who are re-entering communities from prison.

The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Celebrates AmeriCorps Week!

AmeriCorps week, which took place May 13th-19th, celebrated AmeriCorps members serving in programs across the country, while encouraging community members to volunteer. This year, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives along with the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Senior Services, the Alabama Emergency Management Agency and the Corporation for National and Community Service State Office hosted a service learning project to commemorate the week. AmeriCorps members from across the state were invited to participate in a disaster preparedness kit-building project for low-income senior citizens.



Governor Bob Riley and community volunteers build a ready kit for low-income seniors.



Essential items for a Ready kit.

The goal

for the day was to create 1000 Ready kits that were to be distributed to senior citizens who otherwise wouldn't be able to provide one for themselves. In attendance was Governor Bob Riley who not only spoke about the importance of volunteerism and the impact that it has made in Alabama, but also participated in building kits. After the 1000-kit goal was met, attendees enjoyed a BBQ lunch and each AmeriCorps State program presented their accomplishments from the past year.

Members told personal accounts of how

volunteerism has impacted their lives. The day not only provided essential disaster preparedness supplies for low-income seniors, but also showcased the invaluable service that AmeriCorps provides for the state of Alabama.

Members of AmeriCorps receive real-life education and service experience wrapped up into one. They learn teamwork, effective communication, leadership, responsibility and more. Members experience the satisfaction of taking on challenges and seeing positive results. AmeriCorps members have the experience of a lifetime. To learn more about AmeriCorps State programs as well as the other branches of this national service organization, go to www.americorps.gov.



Be Informed.



Be Involved.



Be Ready.

Alabama, are **YOU** ready?

With hurricane season upon us, the push for disaster preparedness is imperative. September marks National Preparedness Month— a month dedicated to citizen and community preparedness. Last year, the first *Be Ready Camp* was held at the US Space and Rocket Center, bringing together 80 sixth grade students from Madison County. Campers spent four days receiving training in fire safety, water survival skills, light search and rescue, and a variety of other training. On the final night of camp, the student participated in a disaster simulation that received national coverage from the Cable News Network (CNN). In 2007, the camp has been expanded into three camps with sixth graders from across Alabama in attendance.

September 30th marks the Second Annual *Be Ready Sunday*. Churches and faith-based group are encouraged to address their congregations on the importance of preparedness. Resources, such as bulletins and preparedness tips, can be found at www.ServeAlabama.gov.

Be Ready Day will be held in Tuscaloosa at the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office Hangar at 7609 Robert Cardinal Airport Road on Friday, September 28th, 2007. The event will bring together professional responders, community volunteers, and faith and community-based groups from across Alabama. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit displays, watch demonstrations, and receive valuable information on preparing themselves and their families for disasters. For more information on upcoming activities please visit www.ServeAlabama.gov. See you in September!

National Preparedness Month Calender

Be Ready Camp I	Huntsville	September 4-8
Be Ready Camp II	Huntsville	September 11-15
Be Ready Camp III	Huntsville	September 18-22
Be Ready Day	Tuscaloosa	September 28
Be Ready Sunday	State Wide	September 30



Preparing Your Pet for a Disaster

The best way to protect your family from the effects of a disaster is to have a disaster plan. If you are a pet owner, that plan must include your pets. Being prepared can save their lives.

- **Have a safe place to take your pets:** It may be difficult, if not impossible, to find shelter for your animals in the midst of a disaster, so plan ahead. Do not wait until a disaster strikes to do your research. Make contacts outside your immediate area with hotels, friends and family, boarding facilities and local animal shelters.
- **Assemble a portable pet ready kit:** Regardless of the length of time your pet will be away from home, there are essential supplies he will need. In a container, include medications and medical records, leashes and/or carriers, a current photo (in case your pet goes missing), food, water, bowls, kitty litter, information on feedings schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems and how to contact the veterinarian.
- **Know what to do as a disaster approaches:** Often times, warnings are issued hours—even days—prior to a disaster striking. Use that time to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for you and your pet, check to be sure you have everything needed in your pet's ready kit, and be sure that your animal has a collar with up-to-date identification on it.
- **Have a plan in place, in case you are not home:** Since a disaster can strike at any moment, it is important for you to make a plan in case you are not with your animal. Ask a trusted neighbor, friend or family member to evacuate your pet to a predetermined location. This person should be familiar with your pets, know where your pet ready kit is located, and have a key to your home.

Protect Your Home from Wildfires

Wildfires often begin unnoticed. They spread quickly, igniting brush, trees and homes. Reduce your risk by preparing now before wildfire strikes.

- Regularly clean the roof and gutters
- Inspect chimneys twice a year. Clean them once a year
- Install a smoke detector on each level of your home; especially near bedrooms
- Teach each family member how to use a fire extinguisher
- Keep a ladder that will reach the roof
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes
- Keep household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, bucket, and shovel

Learn more about the Faith-Based Initiative and the GFBCI

The next information seminars will be held on

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Thursday, September 13, 2007

For information on time, location, and additional seminars call

(334) 242-7110 or toll-free (877) 273-5018

The *GFBCI Newsletter* is a quarterly publication of the Alabama Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI). To be added or removed from our distribution list, please contact the GFBCI via email at info@ServeAlabama.gov.