

## A FLOOD OF VOLUNTEERS IN RURAL ILLINOIS

In 2011, a vast, rural area in southern Illinois suffered catastrophic flooding from the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Thousands of residents were affected, and many were forced to evacuate, including the staff of the Southern 7 Health Department (S7HD) that would normally help in such a crisis. As a result, S7HD made establishing a Medical Reserve Corps a preparedness planning priority.

The goal of the MRC is to increase personnel capacity during a public health response by recruiting and training volunteers to supplement staffing for shelters, vaccination clinics, and other medical care sites. Following HHS approval, S7HD formed an MRC Advisory Board consisting of representatives from a variety of agencies and organizations and started recruiting volunteers. S7HD used PHEP funds, plus other grants and awards, to develop public awareness campaigns and provide volunteer training. By early 2013, more than 30 volunteers completed the required MRC training. S7HD believes that such training, coupled with their overall approach to building a robust volunteer workforce, will increase the overall excellence of their public health response efforts should another disaster strike.

