

Year of the Volunteer

Good Afternoon Preparedness Partners,

Volunteers are the cornerstone of the communities they serve. They are the individuals who say “yes” when many others may say “no.” Their commitment, compassion, and willingness to serve make an immeasurable difference. Because of volunteers, uninsured and underinsured Georgians have gained access to healthcare through the partnering clinics and corporations of the Georgia Volunteer Healthcare Program (GVHCP). Because of volunteers, the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) has been able to provide trainings, conduct community outreach, and prepare both medical and non-medical volunteers to respond when emergencies occur and help strengthen public health during blue sky days. Through the State Emergency Registry of Volunteers in Georgia (SERVGA) system, organizational and unit leaders can recruit medical and non-medical volunteers while utilizing notification, credentialing, and mission management tools to support and track volunteer activities.

As we enter the **Year of the Volunteer**, I encourage you to be intentional about ensuring that volunteers have a seat at the table. Their voices, skills, and experiences can strengthen the work we do and help us better serve our communities. Do you have messages you need to get to your citizens but are limited on time or capacity? Could you use additional support to help extend your reach? While volunteers are not staff, they can help lighten the load. To truly capitalize on their skills and expertise, however, we must be intentional about building relationships, understanding their strengths, and creating meaningful opportunities for them to contribute.

If you would like to learn more about the GVHCP, MRC, SERVGA and volunteer programs, please do not hesitate to reach out to VolunteerProgram@dph.ga.gov. We are here to serve as connectors and help strengthen partnerships between volunteers and the communities that need them.

As you review your invitation lists, meeting agendas, and community partnerships, be intentional about including your volunteer partners. **Give them a seat at the table, a voice in the conversation, and an opportunity to serve.**

Regards,

LaKieva Williams

Volunteer Program Director

Emergency Preparedness and Response