

Stories of Strength

*.: Community Organizations' Stories of Resiliency & Growth
Following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill*



February 2014





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The Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities team includes biologists, psychologists, social scientists and members of the community working together on a project that addresses the environmental, economic and emotional health concerns in Gulf Coast communities arising from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The work of our scientific team, in close association with our community partners, is designed to help Gulf Coast residents recover and strengthen resiliency in the face of this and future disasters. This initiative includes the University of Florida, the University of Maryland, the University of Arizona, the University of West Florida and the University of New Orleans and is being supported by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), a sub-agency of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). To learn more about the Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities Project, please visit our website at www.healthygulfoast.org.

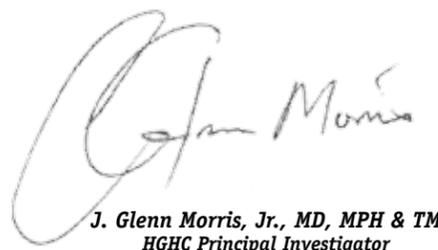
.: Welcome from Dr. Glenn Morris

Our work with the Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities project would not be possible without the guidance and collaboration of our community partners. As we approach the halfway point of this project, we wanted to highlight the work of our researchers, but also the amazing efforts, perseverance and passion of several of our many community partners. These stories are just a snapshot of the dedicated efforts of our partners to building better communities.

Since 2010, the Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities research consortium project, which is one of the four funded Deepwater Horizon Research Consortia in the five Gulf states region, has been active in project sites along the Florida - Alabama Gulf Coast, including Cedar Key, Steinhatchee, the Florida Panhandle and Baldwin County, Ala. Our work includes three research study component cores, focusing on individual psychological impact/resilience, community impact/resilience and seafood safety. In addition to the three research components, the community outreach and dissemination core is active in determining the best way to engage in two way communication and dissemination of results to the communities we serve. The five-year project is funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, a division of the National Institutes of Health, and includes five institutions, including the University of Florida, University of Maryland, Arizona State University, the University of West Florida and the University of New Orleans.

We thank the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences for providing the resources for us to learn from the communities we serve and to work with our partners to determine how best to fill the gaps and address needs in these areas following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. In addition, we thank our community partners and hope that through our work, we can assist these communities by enhancing their understanding of and capacity to respond to current and future disasters. This project has been about partnerships and building resilience in communities. It is our hope that this work continues to help these communities strengthen and grow.




J. Glenn Morris, Jr., MD, MPH & TM
HGHC Principal Investigator



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.: Individual and Family Resiliency After Environmental Disasters

Dr. Lynn Grattan with the University of Maryland is investigating the psychological impacts of the DWHOS in two northeastern Gulf Coast Communities. Her studies were initiated during the oil spill and a cohort of 160 adults is currently being followed to document psychological status over time.



Dr. Lynn Grattan, PhD
Project Director

Results indicate that income stability; positive perceptions of environmental recovery; and attitudes related to resilience (e.g. self-efficacy) were consistently associated with better mental health outcomes two years post the 2010 oil spill. Over time, depression decreased in the entire sample while symptoms of anxiety persisted. In addition, throughout the study period, anger and bitterness were associated with greater mood disturbance, more post-traumatic symptoms, and increased health symptom complaints. Finally, data also suggests that cumulative trauma (pre Deepwater Horizon oil spill) contributes to an increased likelihood of persistent mental health problems. In summary, psychological recovery post-oil spill appears to be a protracted process driven by economic and environmental recovery as well as individual factors.

.: Community Resiliency

Dr. Brian Mayer with the University of Arizona assesses resilience at the community level in Gulf Coast communities. Dr. Mayer found that the oil spill causes significant amounts of social disruption, leading to the onset of "corrosive communities." In particular, problems with the claims process, including a lack of transparency and perceived inequalities in payments and frustrations with the recovery process, led to individual and intergroup conflicts.



Dr. Brian Mayer, PhD
Project Director

When communities are recovering from disasters such as oil spills, they rely on both formal and informal relationships to mobilize resources necessary to rebuild and return to normal. These resources are accessed by social relationships, or social capital, and are essential for ensuring a timely and sufficient recovery. However, disasters like the oil spill - which grant authority to responsible parties like BP - may inhibit the recovery process by removing individual and community sense of self-efficacy by limiting their participation. Full recovery, through resiliency, requires a response that builds on existing capacities and institutions that fully empowers a community to adapt and prepare for the future.

.: Seafood Hydrocarbon Residues & Risk in Coastal Community Health

Dr. Andrew Kane with the University of Florida studies the safety of seafood. For this project, his research and community efforts focus on potential oil spill-related contamination as related to in-shore, non-commercial seafood harvests. Dr. Kane and his research team are conducting risk assessment and communications based on sampling of seafood and analytical toxicology efforts, and assessment of seafood consumption patterns using a consumption survey. He has reached out to community partners and his efforts have been supported by community members and affiliated organizations from along the northern Gulf Coast. The results of the toxicology studies to date show that contaminants in seafood harvested by non-commercial fishers are at background levels (or not detectable), and are less than the level that would concern the US Food Drug and Administration.



Dr. Andy Kane, PhD
Project Director

.: Community Outreach & Dissemination

Dr. Tracy Irani with the University of Florida works to understand communities in order to develop best practices and materials for dissemination and outreach. One way to best understand how to engage stakeholders and develop effective outreach is to work with community leaders and residents within a community. Given this, the community outreach core that Dr. Irani leads organized a community advisory Committee (CAC) that includes 20 community leaders and members from targeted project sites. This committee meets as a group annually and is asked to serve in an advisory role throughout the year. Together with the committee, the HGHC team hosted a Regional Forum Meeting in 2012 and has conducted individual interviews and focus groups to determine the needs and gaps of communities affected by the spill. Work with community members has shown that residents are concerned over conflicting information and the lack of credible information, have a distrust of information from the government and BP, and are concerned about an uncertain future.



Dr. Tracy Irani, PhD
Project Director

Given these concerns, coupled with research findings from projects one, two and three, the HGHC community outreach core team strives to develop structures, networks, best management practices and model programs to assist communities in rebuilding and for preparing for future disasters.



Preparing for a Brighter Future

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.: Franklin's Promise Coalition

Coming together as a community after a crisis is not new for the coastal residents of Franklin County, Fla. Like many communities along the Gulf Coast, preparing and rebuilding after natural disasters have become a way of life.

To assist, organizations have stepped forward to encourage and facilitate community members not only to pick up the pieces after a disaster, but also to grow and learn from the experience. One such organization, Franklin's Promise Coalition, works tirelessly with organizational partners across the region to help community members move beyond disasters. Engaging community members, organizations, churches and institutions to work collaboratively to put residents back on track financially and emotionally is central to the mission of Franklin's Promise Coalition.

"We live in crisis, interrupted by disasters," said Joe Taylor, Executive Director of Franklin's Promise Coalition. "We are constantly evolving as an organization to help the community."

Addressing economic issues in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill was a top priority for these communities. Oyster production in Franklin County accounts for 90 percent of oysters sold in Florida and over 10 percent in the continental US. Over half of Franklin County residents rely on Apalachicola Bay for their main source of income.

In response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill seafood consumers canceled orders and many Franklin County residents found that there was no longer a demand for their products.

"Many community residents who did not need our services in the past were calling us and asking what to do," Taylor said.

Unfortunately, time has not healed the wounds in Franklin County. The oyster collapse of 2012 stemming from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill further exacerbated problems. Understanding the problems at hand, Franklin's Promise Coalition had to continue to evolve by incorporating new strategies. Limited job opportunities and multi-generational

poverty issues complicate recovery efforts.

"We realized early-on that we needed partnerships at many different levels," Taylor said. "Therefore, we had to reach beyond our comfort zone to make the connections that we knew would help. It has been our job to see that our partners and our collective programs empower the affected people to be active agents in addressing community issues."



Joe Taylor

Utilizing the community's strengths and matching them with collaborative new partnerships has paid off. In the last few years, local and state political leaders, state agencies, non-profit organizations, churches and volunteers have integrated efforts and supported families to help them achieve recovery and stability.

Today, support systems have been implemented to provide backing for new job skill development initiatives, bay restoration projects and empowerment programs that cushion the economic blow, Taylor said.

"Our work focuses on removing the barriers that keep our community from being happy, healthy and whole," Taylor said. "Working together with a broad range of partners and developing the leadership of community members who have the knowledge of past experiences will address long-term problems with sustainable results."

Building relationships and bridging capital, whether it is an individual's social capital or an organization's operational capacity, is the key to results, Taylor said.

"When coming together with our partners, there are no individual organizations. We are there as one, working together to address problems," Taylor said.

To learn more, visit the Franklin's Promise Coalition website at www.franklinspromisecoalition.org.

.: Building Bridges to Circles: Creating a Path Out of Poverty

Residents who live along the stretch of coastline between Panama City and Tallahassee have learned to quietly endure what life and nature throw at them, from economic hardships to natural and man made disasters. While systems exist to serve these areas and provide resources, many find the remoteness a hindrance to recent efforts to bring real support and change to the area following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. In order to combat the feeling of isolation, community programs have been introduced into the area to address problems and issues that have been exacerbated by the oil spill.

The Bridges to Circles Program (Or "Circles" as it is more commonly known) has planted roots in three locations in the Florida Panhandle, including Pensacola, Panama City and Apalachicola, as part of the Circles of Northwest Florida initiative. Circles of Northwest Florida is a prosperity initiative of Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida and was formed to provide a path out of generational poverty and toward self reliance and resilience.

"These are ruggedly independent, good people," said Brunie Emmanuel, Director of Operations with MANNA Food Pantries and formerly with Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida. "When you get to know them, you just fall in love with them."

The Circles model is a national program that was started in 2000 as an approach for communities to address long-term poverty issues. Circle chapters are formed through a membership program with Circles USA. The model includes training, developing allies, support and assessment, which is all facilitated by a trained Circle Leader.

The actual program takes families who want out of poverty and enrolls them in a 15-week program of education, interaction and training. The participants learn how to develop emotional, mental and financial resources necessary for independence. They focus on everything from home ownership and employment to savings accounts and life plans.

After completing the program, these new graduates become Circle Leaders and meet with two or three allies (volunteers) weekly for a meal and discussion on creating personal and family development plans, and building life plans with support from these allies. Those in the Circles program typically remain "Circle Leaders" for 1.5 years, working to obtain a living wage job and climb out of poverty.



Carlton Ward, Carlton Ward Photography

Many program graduates end up returning and participating in the program as allies, helping others work their way up and out of generational poverty as they have.

"We very clearly saw the ripple effect that was happening in the culture as people began climbing out of poverty," said Emmanuel. "It works. A grandma and a mother see a young woman changing her life, and it starts to ripple into the family's other generations. Aunts, uncles, relatives see the change and want to participate. It really starts changing the community."

In addition to the program initiative, a pot of benevolence money administered by Catholic Charities has provided families with help for rental assistance, education courses, fixing boat engines to get back to work, future planning and many other needs.

Pensacola, Panama City and Apalachicola have seen the benefits of the program, with Circles graduates finding a pathway to a living wage. Change is occurring along the Gulf Coast, even in remote areas where healing from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill remains a slow process.

More information on the Circles program can be found on the Catholic Charities website: www.ccnwfl.org/bridges-to-circles.



Photo by: Dr. Andy Kane, University of Florida

Fighting Back

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.: Oyster Recovery in Apalachicola Bay

Ripple effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill from 2010 were still very real for Apalachicola Bay in 2012 when oyster production turned down significantly. In response to the collapse of commercial oyster harvesting, University of Florida (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences responded with the development of the UF Oyster Recovery Team. The team, led by Karl Havens, Director of Florida Sea Grant, was assembled to provide research on potential causes of the decline in oysters, determine potential recovery efforts and assist the community to overcome social and economic problems due to the collapse.



Shannon Hartsfield

The team included UF researchers with a vast amount of knowledge of oysters and Florida ecosystems. Researchers from Florida State University, Florida Gulf Coast University, state regulatory agencies, the Northwest Florida Water Management District and representatives from the Apalachicola Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve also were part of the team.

Them team worked in the community from October 2012 until February 2013 conducting research, hosting public meetings and working with community members and industry leaders. Partnerships with seafood worker leaders in the area led to an ongoing relationship built on trust and mutual respect.

"The UF Oyster Recovery Team worked with us to conduct research. We worked collaboratively with them to collect research. They listened to us and provided excellent insight and recommendations," said Shannon Hartsfield, President of Franklin County Seafood Worker's Association.

In April 2013, the team developed a situation report, which provided results of the research efforts in the area as well as recommendations for the future. The team continues to work with the community through the Seafood Management Assistance Resource and Recovery (SMARRT) Team which is a community initiative that was started by seafood workers in partnership with the Oyster Recovery Team to ensure a sustainable seafood industry in Apalachicola Bay.

In the near future, two UF members of the team, Dr. Andrew Kane and Karl Havens will be working closely with the community again as they conduct the biological assessment of an experimental shelling project being done by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

.: Seafood Management Assistance Resource and Recovery (SMARRT) Team

Hardships faced by the Apalachicola Bay community have not crushed the spirit of community members. Despite the tough times following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the oyster industry collapse in 2012, members of the community are continuing to look for ways to better their current economic situation.

To fight back for a better future for Apalachicola Bay, in 2012, local seafood industry workers launched a community-based collaborative effort to build local capacity/consensus. The goal of this initiative is to develop a sustainable and resilient resource management plan to insure the future of Franklin County's seafood heritage. The Seafood Management Assistance Resource and Recovery Team (SMARRT) includes seafood and tourist industry user groups dependent on the Apalachicola Bay.

Members of the 15-person team include oystermen, crabbers, shrimpers, guides, dealers, local association representatives, fishermen and clambers. In addition to team members, SMARRT works closely with supporting resources and advisors including governmental leaders and organizations. The group meets once a month and expects 100 percent consensus on decisions made at the meetings.

"SMARRT is truly the future of the Apalachicola Bay. The decisions they are making together and the work they are doing is directly affecting the future of the seafood industry in Franklin County," said Betty Webb, facilitator for the SMARRT group. "This group is dedicated to making the hard decisions for the betterment of the Bay."

SMARRT members have recently partnered with the Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities team for leadership and team development training. The training is aimed at helping SMARRT members understand their roles as opinion leaders and decision makers in the community. In addition, the team development training provides insight on working together and making collaborative decisions.

SMARRT's work is focused on programs and decisions that directly impact the health of the Apalachicola Bay and the production of seafood. Since its inception in January 2013, this group has worked with local regulating agencies and met with program specialists for aquaculture and water management systems. Future work includes developing a management plan for the Apalachicola Bay and continuing to work toward the goal of a sustainable bay.

.: Project Rebound

The economic and environmental impacts following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill were assumed and expected; however, the psychological impacts on the people of the Gulf Coast communities were perhaps not quite as anticipated. In Mobile and Baldwin County, Ala. addressing the psychological impacts called for reinstating a mental health relief initiative.

Project Rebound, a mental health counseling and resource program, is a mental health initiative by the Alabama Department of Mental Health in partnership with other organizations. This program is designed to respond to mental health needs immediately following disasters.

Project Rebound was reactivated by the Alabama Department of Mental Health after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to provide assistance for people affected by the spill. Funded by a grant from BP, the mental health model was enacted through door-to-door counseling, a 24/7 manned 1-800 number, crisis response teams, and in-school programs for students and staff.

"It took months and months to truly hit home until people realized they needed help," said Executive Director Paige Rucker.

Removing the stigma associated with formal mental health assistance also remains a priority.

"Creating a mobile mental health model is very important during a disaster. Nobody calls for mental health issues. They'll call about needing their rent paid, their child suffering in school, or needing to talk to someone," Rucker said.

Accordingly, Project Rebound attempted to eliminate the stigma associated with approaching mental health professionals by meeting residents in coffee shops and in their homes, providing a safe, familiar environment.



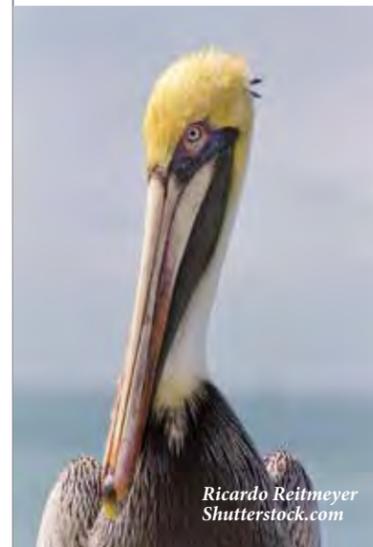
Paige Rucker

Project Rebound was able to deploy a team within the hour, making them a pivotal crisis response resource in the area. Additionally, the police department in the city of Foley (Baldwin County) has noted a decrease in repeat offenders for domestic violence as a possible result of their mental health outreach efforts in the community.

"Developing a trust where people are willing and want to talk to you, get things off their chest, is very important in getting through a disaster," Rucker said.

In addition to providing for their community's mental health needs, Project Rebound partnered with networking organizations to help residents find aid and information following the oil spill. Although immediate crisis counseling was always available, other programs were initiated where a need was determined. One program is the Roller Coaster program installed at 14 local schools. This program includes support for children of divorced and separated parents.

Project Rebound ended in December 2013, having served as an immediate mental health response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, but several program initiatives will continue.



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Coming Together



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.: Cedar Key

In the small community of Cedar Key, Fla., the smallness of the town does not take anything away from its very large assets. As with many Gulf Coast communities, facing disasters and issues threatening their natural resource dependent economy is not new. To overcome many of these threats, Cedar Key relies on its best weapon, its people.

Cedar Key is a dominant clam production area on Florida's northwest coast. Over 80 percent of Florida's clam industry is made up of 150 small-scale clam farmers that reside and work in this area.

Community members congregate in close-knit groups and they describe the community as strong because of its people.

"Helping out is a way of life. In times of adversity, people do want to help one another. This makes for a strong community," said Leslie Sturmer, University of Florida IFAS Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Agent and Cedar Key resident.

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill tested this community, with loss of income and jobs happening to many community members. In addition, there was a sense of unknown dread among community members not knowing if oil was going to reach the coast. As in past disasters, industry members and emergency management teams came together to determine the best course of action and prepare for the worst-case scenario.

Community members viewed the experience as an opportunity to learn lessons and determine where the community could improve in the face of man-made disasters.

Members of the community came together and provided crisis responses and new ways to overcome disasters, Sturmer said.

"Task force and growers association members took a proactive role to ensure safety of their industry and address needs to strengthen their response, including loss claims," Sturmer said.

Cedar Key residents developed a new area contingency plan, identifying natural resources that would need protection. The growers association addressed deficiencies in the response system for open-water shellfish aquaculture farms and provided new means to unify response structures and communication.

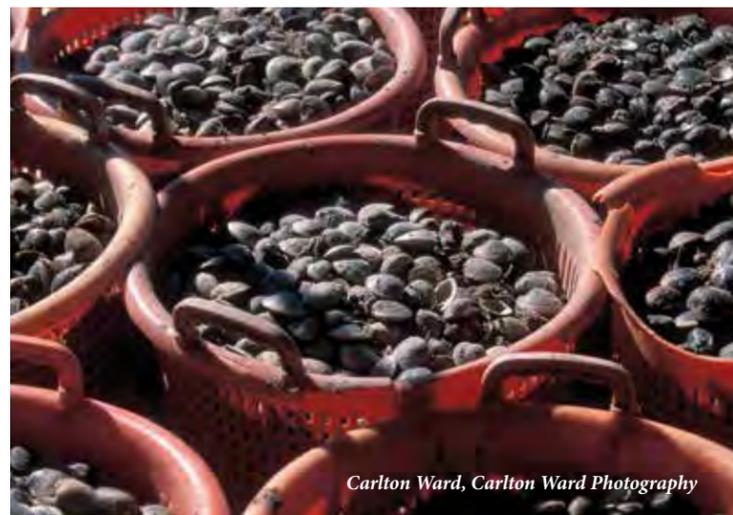
In addition to community response and communication, the Cedar Key community was shaken psychologically. Community members defined the not knowing and waiting as frightening. In addition, the dramatic decrease in orders for product caused many in the community to become worried and anxious about income stability.

As a community that relies heavily on seafood production, Sturmer explained the largest challenge of the disaster was proving assurances to consumers that the clams were safe to consume.

"The largest challenge we faced was making sure consumers understood that shellfish was safe and no oil had reached our coast," Sturmer said. "After the DWH oil spill, over 41 percent of consumers were unwilling to buy Gulf seafood and over one-third were unwilling to buy seafood in general."

State and regional response teams worked to develop a written plan specific to clams and oysters. Plans included seafood harvesting reopening plans, communication plans and training programs, Sturmer said.

Lessons learned from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will provide Cedar Key with a stronger foundation in the face of the next disaster. Perhaps the strongest foundation though is the one that is found in the community every day, the people.



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.: Raising 12 Pillars to Help a Community Deal with Crisis

Following the explosion of Deepwater Horizon on April 20, 2010, many Gulf Coast organizations found that because of the uniqueness of the man-made disaster, previous emergency preparedness plans were ineffective as people waited to see if oil would reach their coast. However, at the foundation of these plans was the ability of individuals and community organizations to find resources to come together to prepare. This collaboration was essential to the success of the initial response.

"Within a week after the well blew, and some weeks after Slick [Deepwater Horizon oil spill] started spreading towards our coast, the executive director of the Escambia County United Way and myself convened meetings of the heads of all major parts of the great social delivery system in the area," said Brunie Emmanuel, Director of Operations at MANNA Food Pantries.

Rallying the troops and collaborating to prepare and react to a disaster is not new to the people of the Gulf Coast. Community organizations often come together in Emergency Operation Centers to implement plans and handle internal and external communications accordingly. However, there was no plan for man-made disasters.

"We were collaborating before the spill and will continue to collaborate," Emmanuel said. "However, this was different. There was no plan for a man-made waterborne disaster along the Gulf Coast."

Despite trudging through new territory, Escambia County organizations quickly went to work and formed the Healthy and Human Service Oil Disaster Recovery Team (HHRT). The mission of this organization was to develop and implement a plan for recovery from the Deepwater Horizon disaster that convened representatives of the key solutions arenas, quickly developed a plan to deal with each area and the overall community's health and well-being, and effectively focused the cross-system-coordinated assets to support and improve the community's resilience.



Brunie Emmanuel

To meet the mission of the HHRT and to develop a plan, 12 Pillars were identified and assigned to community organizations for action.

"We co-created strategies in all of those areas to deal with service issues and with communication," Emmanuel said.

The coordinated and collaborative effort was effective in preparing a proactive approach to a man-made disaster.

"Developing the 12 Pillars allows us to be better prepared for the next man made disaster. Although we learned what to and not to do, the coordinated and collaborative effort at the foundation was strong and will remain," Emmanuel said.

.: 12 Pillars

- 1. Case Management** – Ensure that vulnerable populations get the services they need.
- 2. ESF15** – Communicate needs and work team to local government leaders.
- 3. Faith Based** – Strategies to support spiritual needs, resources and help to those hurt by the disaster; grief recovery.
- 4. Financial** – Work with BP to educate nonprofits about pursuing BP funding and reimbursement through grants or claims. Record keeping of time and labor costs of staff/volunteer.
- 5. Funding** – Funding for team's recovery services.
- 6. Information Sharing** – Work toward a Coordinated Assistance Network and Community Database System to capture needs, duplication and outcomes.
- 7. Job Skills Training** – Determine job-retraining opportunities and communicate relevant information.
- 8. Legal** – Education/assistance with claims submission – help people engage with the system.
- 9. Marketing/Communication** – Develop & disseminate coordinated messaging.
- 10. Mental Health** – Collaborate with Department of Children and Families on proposal to BP and with all partners so training consistent messaging is provided for trust, self care, empowerment, access to mental health services.
- 11. Physical Health Care** – Timely information on oil disaster health data to allay fears, rumor and maintain public health.
- 12. Volunteers** – Increase capacity of nonprofit agencies by increasing number of quality volunteer opportunities and number of active volunteers at these agencies.

Preparing for the Unexpected



Photo by: Carlton Ward, Carlton Ward Photography

Carlton Ward, Carlton Ward Photography

.: Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies (BRACE)

Lessons learned from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill have provided some organizations with valuable insights to plan for the future.

Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies (BRACE) in Pensacola, Fla., has a vision of helping Pensacola become the most disaster-resilient community in America. This vision is at the core of all their hard work when preparing and responding during a disaster.



Greg Strader

During the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, BRACE assumed responsibility for mobilizing volunteers at the request of the United Way of Escambia County and Escambia County Emergency Management after the activation of the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for the event.

"During the month-long activation for the Deepwater Horizon event, BRACE coordinated over 1,900 volunteers that provided over 10,000 hours of volunteer service, valued at over \$200,000," Executive Director Greg Strader said.

In addition to providing coordinating efforts for volunteers, BRACE worked collaboratively with other community organizations to best meet the needs of community members.

"BRACE leadership also co-lead efforts to convene and coordinate organizations and agencies providing human services support to individuals and families impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in partnership with the United Way of Escambia County," Strader said. "The response and recovery strategies employed by the partnership were soon recognized as a national best practice."

Developing best national practices is not new to the BRACE organization. BRACE was recently honored as the most recognized partnership in America through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual & Community Preparedness Awards program.

Partnerships are at the root of BRACE. The organization was established in 2006 with a vision of reducing loss of life, injury, property damage, environmental impact and economic loss due to disaster, through fostering communication, cooperation, collaboration and coordination among community, faith-based, non-profit, private and public organizations active in one or more phases of emergency management.

Prior to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, BRACE focused a great deal on natural disasters. Working before, during, and after the oil spill has provided the organization with much needed information and plans when preparing for the next man-made disaster. Work done during the oil spill in this area has earned attention from other communities.

"Due to the success of BRACE and its partners in responding to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, BRACE was contracted by Catholic Charities, using funds granted by the Rockefeller Fund Advisors, to assist five coastal counties in Northwest Florida in establishing or strengthening a Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) or Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)," Strader said.

In addition, the BRACE model will be applied to other areas in Florida. Thanks to a recently awarded grant by the Florida Division of Emergency Management, BRACE will be expanding their services to all 67 counties in Florida. BRACE is the first grassroots organization to be awarded a Florida Division of Emergency Management, Residential Construction Mitigation Program grant.

"We are hopeful that the program will lead to enhanced resilience throughout the state of Florida," Strader said.

With a staff of 2.5 full-time employees, Strader said, "Much of the success of BRACE is attributable to the support of over 500 partners that recognize great things can be accomplished by working together. Many of the accomplishments of the Partners of BRACE would not have been possible for any single organization working independently."

Looking towards the future, BRACE leadership is in the process of updating their strategic plan with support from Emergency Management and several of their strategic partners.

"We have recognized that the capacity of some Emergency Management partners has changed because of government funding and contributions, and we want to refocus our efforts in ways that we can best assist in coordinating efforts to fill gaps, while avoiding duplication," Strader said.

"Once we understand what capabilities and capacity has changed, we will develop plans that address the highest priority community needs to the extent BRACE and our partners have capacity."

For more information on BRACE, including their projects, partners, events, and other material, visit their website: www.bereadyalliance.org.

.: Safer Santa Rosa

Unfortunate events, such as hurricanes or power outages, can occur with or without warning. Whether natural or man-made, it is certain that disasters affect the short-term and long-term well being of individuals, communities, and the environment. While natural disasters typically allow for individuals and communities to plan and be prepared for the catastrophe, sometimes disasters do not. The suddenness of unanticipated disasters can leave a crisis unattended for long periods of time, often prolonging the physical and emotional damages of the situation.



Daniel Hahn

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill took place and lasted a total of 87 days. The 4.9 million barrel oil spill claimed 11 lives and left extensive damage to marine and wildlife habitats, and to the fishing and tourism industries. The oil spill, which happened just about 50 miles off the Louisiana coast, spread deeply into the Gulf of Mexico, eventually reaching the Alabama and Santa Rosa County lines.

The Support Alliance for Emergency Readiness (SAFER) Santa Rosa took immediate actions to aid in the relief of the Deepwater oil spill aftermath. By bringing the community together, SAFER Santa Rosa has been able to help support the emotional well being of its community and residents and to assist with the clean up of its beaches.

Due to the oil spill leaving thousands of people in fear, one of SAFER Santa Rosa's goals was to keep its residents and visitors informed about the current and future status of its beaches. In an attempt to lead his community back to normal, Daniel Hahn, Santa Rosa County Emergency Operating Center Plans Chief, helped in the planning and development of Shoreline Users Resource Force (SURF) Volunteer Opportunity on Navarre Beach.

"We had a group of AmeriCorps volunteers come into the county," said Hahn. "We housed them and they set to work on developing a program to educate beach goers on what was happening on our beach. They developed information packets and we got them vests, tents, and made patches so they would be recognizable. The intent was to let people know it was safe to be on the beach, and answer questions about local flora and fauna for visitors."

SAFER Santa Rosa and Hahn's specific and carefully executed goals and tactics led their beaches to experience economic growth during a time when every other beach affected by the oil spill was experiencing financial loss. Aside from the SURF Volunteer Program, SAFER Santa Rosa also created outstanding web materials to keep its residents and visitors informed.

SAFER Santa Rosa and Hahn's communication efforts have been recognized by the National Safety Council (NSC), and are currently being recommended to receive the SAFE Community designation. The NSC believes other counties could learn from Santa Rosa's work.

"The evaluators were impressed with many aspects of Santa Rosa County," said Hahn, "especially with the avenues of communication between organizations designed keep county citizens out of harm's way."



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Thank You

to our Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities Community Partners

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alabama Seafood Association | Florida Division of Children and Families, Circuit 1 | SAFER: Support Alliance for Emergency Readiness |
| Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) | Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission | Shane Mayfield, Fishing Charters |
| Apalachicola Riverkeeper & Osprey Program, & reporting by the Half Shell Channel | Florida Sea Grant | SMARTT: Seafood Management Assistance Resource & Recovery Team |
| BRACE: Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies | Franklin County Dealers Association | Steinhatchee River Chamber of Commerce |
| Catholic Charities, Northwest Florida | Franklin County Seafood Workers Association | The Florida Center for Prevention Research |
| Cedar Key Aquaculture Association | Franklin's Promise Coalition, Inc. | The Filipino-American Association of Pensacola |
| Citizens Against Toxic Exposure | Gator Nelson | Toby and Hayward McKinney |
| City of Apalachicola | Gulf Coast Workforce Board | United Way Escambia County |
| Community Resource Associates | Island Fresh Seafood | University of Florida Oyster Recovery Team |
| Dr. James Connors & Dr. Will Patterson, University of South Alabama | Northwest Florida Water Management District | University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension |
| Emerald Coast Counseling | Organizers of the Dauphin Island Fishing Rodeo | Wakulla County Coalition for Youth |
| Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Aquaculture Division | Organizers of the Pensacola Bud Light Fishing Rodeo | Water Street Hotel & Marina, Apalachicola, FL |
| | Organizers of the Steinhatchee Reeling for Kids Tournament | |
| | Project Rebound | |
| | RAISE Florida Network - War on Poverty - Florida, Inc. | |

