Health Department Launches Call for Public Health Volunteers

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BRANDON - Debbie Boyce is a passionate community volunteer, whether she is supporting a local vaccine clinic or through her service as an Emergency Medical Technician.

“She is a phenomenal volunteer – very dedicated and works really hard,” said Sue Hommel, a public health specialist for the Vermont Department of Health. Hommel recruited Boyce to serve as the Rutland County Medical Reserve Corps unit coordinator two years ago.

Boyce is featured in On Call for Vermont television and web videos launched today to recruit volunteers to serve as Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers. An EMS recruitment and retention survey conducted by the Health Department in January 2014 showed that two-thirds of EMS agencies statewide felt understaffed.

The Health Department hopes On Call for Vermont will recruit hundreds of volunteers who are willing to put their skills to use to help others.

Boyce said she felt obligated as a retired educator to give back to her community. Less than two months after joining the team, Boyce traveled to Washington DC to receive specialized Medical Reserve Corps training.

“One thing we were taught is the importance of communicating because people faced with a public health concern get very worried,” Boyce said. “It's important to listen closely and with compassion to people before you tell them the actions they need to take to protect themselves and others.”

Boyce has helped recruit more than 30 volunteers in her area, including several retired nurses, to serve Rutland and Addison counties. They are trained to respond quickly in the event they are activated by a community need or a larger Health Department activation.

Volunteers join On Call for Vermont to prepare and respond to community health threats, to gain clinical experience, and for professional development. Boyce is constantly recruiting new members. She also writes a column in the local paper, and holds monthly meetings to keep her community strong, safe and healthy.

Boyce feels a camaraderie with the other volunteers, and is proud of the work done by other units across Vermont, such as the Chittenden County MRC that recently supported the tuberculosis testing clinics for students at Charlotte Central School.

“What really draws me to Vermont is the giving of people,” Boyce added. “Often they don’t even really need to be asked. They are there to give.”

For more information on how to join On Call for Vermont visit: OnCallforVT.org.

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