

Volunteer Profile: Kristina McCord

By Scott Laird

Firefighter, Emergency Medical Service and Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers fill a crucial role in small rural communities. They spend many hours of their time receiving their initial training and certification and then many more hours on required continuing training and education. They respond to our emergencies at all hours of the day and night. Because we all have such busy schedules, and many local residents commute out of town for work, our local departments sometimes have trouble filling volunteer positions. In this series of articles, Vernonia's Voice will profile some of our local volunteers who sacrifice week in and week out to help keep our community safe.

When Kristina McCord decides to do something, she jumps in with both feet. At least that's the impression you get when you talk with Kris about her volunteer service with Vernonia's Public Safety organizations.

"First I joined CERT (Citizen Emergency Response Team), then I became a First Responder through the Fire Department, then I joined the Fire Department, then I volunteered with the Police Department," said McCord, who has lived in Vernonia for twenty-three years, since she was in the fifth grade. "And then I became an EMT Basic with Metro West Ambulance, and now I volunteer with the Ambulance Association."

McCord has parleyed her volunteering with the Ambulance Association into a part-time paying job, working some shifts with the staff Paramedic in Vernonia during daytime hours, and covering special events for Metro West Ambulance on occasion. She was also part of the volunteer crews who dropped everything last winter and helped Vernonia during and after the flood, working in the command center for almost two weeks in December.

McCord recently had the opportunity to head down to Texas and was deployed to assist flood victims during Hurricane Ike. It was an opportunity and trip of a lifetime for McCord. "I've always wanted to be able to serve and help in a major disaster," said McCord.



Vernonia Volunteer Kristine McCord

McCord was part of a strike team from the Pacific Northwest that was mobilized by American Medical Response (AMR) to provide medical support during the disaster. The team arrived in Texas on September 11, and staged with crews from FEMA, the U.S. Military, local and state police, other ambulance crews, and even Border Patrol personnel. "We were told it was the largest task force in U.S. history to respond to a natural disaster," said McCord.

McCord was eventually deployed to Galveston after Ike had passed through. "It was like a ghost town," said McCord. She and her team spent the next twelve days going door-to-door doing welfare checks on residents who had stayed and ridden out the storm, handing out food and water, and feeding abandoned animals. "Fortunately, we never saw any dead bodies," said McCord. Her team was also involved in evacuating two care facilities of elderly patients that had not gotten out before the storm, helping move approximately eighty patients.

"We were supposed to go on ninety-six hour missions, then have twenty-four hours off," said McCord. "Usually we were



Ambulances line up ready to deploy for Hurricane Ike

only off for six hours, then back out." The team slept in the ambulance rig while on missions, and in a military warehouse on cots when on breaks, where they could get hot showers, and use flush toilets. There was a shortage of food, which meant the strike teams got to eat Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's). "I don't need to ever see an MRE again," joked McCord.



McCord (kneeling, right) and her Strike Team in Texas

McCord's experience in the Vernonia Flood last winter made her experience in Texas this year even more meaningful. "People came to Vernonia and helped us; I wanted to be able to go and help someone else."

Kristina McCord is a great example of the many opportunities that might await those who choose to serve their communities through volunteer service with local public safety agencies.

Vernonia EMS Receives Unit Citation

All members of the Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association were awarded a Unit Citation from the Oregon Department of Human Services, Public Health Division, for their work during the December Flood in 2007.

Each member received a plaque which read, in part, "For two weeks the volunteers put their personal lives on hold, after ensuring their own families were taken care of, to respond to the needs of their community during crisis. The hardships endured while they worked their miracles will not be forgotten."

The EMS Unit Citation recognizes acts of organizations, units, or specifically constituted teams in providing emergency pre-hospital care or EMS support activities under extreme circumstances.

Lions Club Donates



Vernonia Lions Club members Marge Lowrance and Larry Snethen present a check for \$500 to Vernonia Cares Director Sandy Welch, to help restock the food bank shelves.

Intel Employees Spend Day in Vernonia

By Jill Hult

Intel is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year, and to celebrate, they have set a goal to volunteer 1 million hours worldwide! Vernonia is home to 76 Intel employees and it was an easy choice as a volunteer location for the IT department since the recent flood of December, 2007. Two employees, Julie Buxton Mullen and Jeff Ely, headed up the September 24th volunteer day.

Buxton Mullen said most IT employees have a goal of 12 volunteer hours per quarter. It is a lot of fun, and encourages team building by bringing together people from multiple departments and locations to work for a common cause.

Buxton Mullen spent many hours making arrangements for transportation, work locations, and food preparation for the event. Headquarters for the Intel group was the Scout Cabin, where they had work gear and assignments ready for the employees when they arrived in two Raz Transportation buses. The Intel team also had ham radio operators on-site to coordinate and keep track of where employees were.

The day brought 183 Intel employees to Vernonia to work on a variety of job sites. The volunteers were split up into groups and headed to spruce up Spencer Park with painting and landscaping, the Vernonia Schools with trimming and landscaping, tree repair at Anderson Park and out by the old pioneer cemetery on Keasey, and to the museum for landscaping and inventory. They also did paint preparation for the Cemetery caretaker's house, computer work at the watershed council and painting at the Senior Center. You may have also seen some of the volunteers along Bridge Street, sweeping the street and cleaning out the planter boxes. The Scout Cabin also got a good window-washing. Another group of about 72 went out to Indigo to repair fences and clean along the river.

Buxton Mullen and the group wanted to put money into the community while they were here, so supplies were purchased from Sentry Market and lunch was catered: Black Bear for sandwiches, Café 47 for a variety of salads, and The Blue House Café for desserts.

Buxton Mullen said the day was a big success, with no injuries or anyone getting lost. Everyone really enjoyed the lunch and had a great time working at every site. They all reported the people in Vernonia were very appreciative and friendly.

Thank you, Julie, Jeff, Intel, and all of the employees that came out to help Vernonia!

To learn more about Intel's volunteer program go to: <http://www.intel.com/community/iimgp.htm>



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