



# Board of Commissioners

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**Press Release**

## **Lake County receives Honorable Mention for the 2014 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards!**

Lake County has received honorable mention from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for its work in addressing community needs following a severe rainfall event last year. In recognition of those efforts, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate will be awarding the county a Certificate of Accomplishment and formally recognizing it on the agency's website <http://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps-awards> in September.

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013 several communities in Lake County received up to six inches of rainfall during a 24-hour period. The event resulted in widespread basement flooding and structural damage to many homes and businesses. Although immense effort was expended by the American Red Cross, the Lake County Emergency Management Agency and building inspectors from several communities in conducting Damage Assessments, uninsured losses did not reach the levels required for a federal Individual Assistance declaration. A number of communities did, however, receive help in paying for debris removal and public infrastructure repairs by applying for grant funds through Ohio's State Disaster Relief Assistance Program.

In order to address the needs of at-risk populations in the days immediately following the event Lake County Citizen Corps Director Cristen Kane organized the opening of a one-day Volunteer Reception Center (VRC). The primary purpose of the VRC was to assist the elderly and any functional-needs residents in the clean-up of their homes. A VRC was also opened following Lake County's federally-declared flooding disaster in 2006 and operated for an entire week.

In one day, 47 Citizen Corps volunteers assisted 14 homeowners in the cleaning of their basements. Each volunteer team, after being processed through the VRC, was issued a "flood-bucket" kit by the American Red Cross and personal protective equipment from the Lake County EMA. Before heading out, a safety briefing was conducted by Medical Reserve Corps volunteers and each group issued a written agreement that had to be signed by the homeowner before any work could be done. The Lake County Citizen Corps received a total of 63 referrals from 2-1-1 identifying eligible residents who required varying types of assistance. Those not assisted by the one-day VRC were contacted and referred to a number of local faith-based groups that offered to assist. As referrals from 2-1-1 continued to come in, the Citizen Corps contacted each caller to check on their condition and receive an update on the situation.

Lake County's Council-on-Aging was enlisted to help monitor homebound seniors receiving Meals-on-Wheels to ensure they were safe in their homes. The Grove Church, led by Pastor Jeff Sivyer, assisted in the cleaning of 10 homes that had been flooded and whose owners could not complete the work themselves. The Willowick Hearts-N-Hammers volunteer group assisted many elderly residents as a result of referrals made through 2-1-1. A Citizen Corps volunteer coordinated these activities to make sure that any residents with standing water in their basement after one-week were referred to their local government or a faith-based group for assistance. Citizen Corps volunteers made follow-up calls to ensure those who had requested help had, in fact, received it.

Following the immediate response, the Tri-County CARES (Compassionate Assistance & Response after Emergencies) volunteer network was re-activated on August 16, 2013. This group had originally been formed following the 2006 flooding disaster. Tri-County C.A.R.E. is an inter-faith/inter-agency steering committee made up of dedicated volunteers working in a collaborative manner to address the long-term needs of flood victims in Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake Counties. Tri-County C.A.R.E. worked in association with, and in support of, many organizations such as local non-profits, churches, hospitals, businesses and communities to serve residents with unmet needs related to July 2013 flooding event.

Financial assistance, as well as expert advice from Lutheran Disaster Services, United Methodist Disaster Services, United Church of Christ Disaster Services and Ohio VOAD, also assisted in this long-term recovery initiative. Lutheran Disaster Services provided funds to hire a part-time case manager to follow-up with and determine eligibility of any residents reporting they still needed help with flood repair work in August. Citizen Corps staff provided administrative assistance to Tri-County CARES and helped supervise activities of the case manager.

A total of 25 cases were logged by the Tri-County Case Manager. Of those reported cases, a total of 10 homeowners received financial assistance with the following needs being addressed:

- 7 furnace inspections
- 6 hot water tank inspections
- 2 furnace repairs
- 1 hot water tank replacement
- 1 major plumbing repair

A final meeting was held on October 31, 2014 with no new cases on the docket. Email meetings were held through January 2014 to finalize approval for payment on several on-going repairs involving current clients.

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