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## **OU collaborates with award-winning Macomb County Health Department outreach program**

A Macomb County Health Department program focused on teaching community youth about emergency preparedness – in collaboration with the Oakland University **School of Nursing** and Macomb County elementary schools – was recently honored with a 2015 National Health Security Award from the **National Association of County and City Health Officials**.

The Youth Emergency Preparedness Outreach Initiative – facilitated through the Macomb County Health Department **Medical Reserve Corps** – was recognized in the Youth Engagement category for teaching more than 2,000 fifth-graders basic survival skills in the event of a public health crisis.

Prior to teaching the elementary students, OU nursing students and clinical faculty received emergency preparedness training through the Medical Reserve Corps during a Nursing 216 Health Promotions course. The nursing students and faculty then traveled to various elementary schools to teach students about emergency preparedness as part of a Nursing 213 Basic Clinical Competencies course.



*Jennifer Vajcner, right, is pictured with a fellow OU nursing student putting together "bug-out bags" as part of the university's collaboration with the Macomb County Health Department's Youth Emergency Preparedness Outreach Initiative. A bug-out bag contains supplies necessary for survival in the event of a disaster.*

Jennifer Vajcner was among the OU students who took part in the trainings, which focused on limiting the after-effects of disasters such as tornadoes, floods and earthquakes.

"Emphasis was placed on preparing the general public for a time when basic services such as medical care, food, and medicine may not readily available in the wake of a disaster," said Vajcner, who recently graduated from OU with a bachelor of science in nursing. "One of the most important topics presented was having a predetermined meeting area should a family member become separated from the group, a with the phone numbers of each family member."

OU students and faculty also stressed the importance of packing an emergency "bug-out bag" with essentials such as a first-aid kit, medications, a light source, non-perishable food and water.

Nursing instructor Kimberly Holka initiated OU's involvement in the youth preparedness initiative, noting that it helps fulfill common goals among the partners involved.

"Using this whole community approach enhances disaster resilience for Macomb County," said Holka, who is an active member of the Medical Reserve Corps. "Implementing a family communication plan and putting together emergency kits builds preparedness skills for our fifth-graders and their families. At the same time, the nursing students gain a deeper understanding of specific community needs – and how to address them – when disaster strikes."

The National Association of County and City Health Officials created the awards program last fall to recognize local health departments that have demonstrated significant accomplishments in implementing health security-related initiatives. Along with the Youth Engagement category, an award was also given in the categories of Healthcare Coalition Building, and Volunteer Recruitment and Training. Honorees were recognized this summer at the association's annual conference.

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**The Macomb County Health Department Medical Reserve Corps (MCHD-MRC)** mission is to strengthen the community by recruiting and training non-medical and medical volunteers that can be ready and able to provide organized assistance to the Health Department and surrounding communities in the event of a county-wide public health emergency, large scale disaster, terrorist event or disease outbreak.

**The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)** was founded in the 1960s. Since its inception, NACCHO has sought to improve the public's health while adhering to a set of core values: equity, excellence, participation, respect, integrity, leadership, science and innovation. Today, NACCHO is comprised of over 2,800 Local Health Departments across the United States.