

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** November 10, 2009

**TO:** Central Pennsylvania Alliance for Response Planners and Speakers

**FROM:** Tom Clareson, Senior Consultant for New Initiatives, LYRASIS

**SUBJECT:** Summary Report of October 26 Central Pennsylvania Alliance for Response Forum

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The Planning Committee and attendees of the October 26, 2009 Central Pennsylvania Alliance for Response Forum, held at the Wildwood Conference Center at Harrisburg Area Community College, wish to thank all of the presenters at the Forum event for their time and excellent presentations. The activity was a great success in many ways, and served to immediately set the stage for further networking and action on disaster preparedness and recovery in Central Pennsylvania.

As you know, the Alliance for Response is a national initiative to bring together cultural heritage professionals from libraries, museums, historical organizations, and archives with emergency managers and first responders. By “learning each others’ language” and information needs, these two groups can work together in a much more efficient manner to both plan for and react to emergencies and disasters in a metropolitan area or region.

The Alliance for Response program has been going on since 2004. The Central Pennsylvania event represents what Jane Long, Vice President for Emergency Programs at Heritage Preservation (the national coordinating agency for the Alliance for Response) called a “new model” for Alliance programs. First, the program was completely supported by local funding sources (of which ACLCP was the leader), and was not reliant on national funding from The Fidelity Foundation, which supported many of the other 13 programs held nationwide. Secondly, the program was held for a half-day period in a medium-sized metropolitan area, rather than the large cities in which most full-day Forum meetings were held, but the key topics covered in those longer programs were covered in a very efficient manner by the speakers in Harrisburg.

The program included a wide variety of accomplished speakers. It was wonderful to see the post-program evaluations including mentions of almost every one of the speakers as having given a presentation which was among the highlights of the day! Approximately 30 people attended the session, with ten from the preservation and emergency management field and twenty from academic libraries, public libraries, museums and a representative of the York County Heritage Trust. While the audience was somewhat smaller than the Planning Group had hoped for, they were a very engaged group and showed a high degree of appreciation for the program. And, with the success of this initial program, there is a great opportunity to attract more attendees to future Central Pennsylvania Alliance for Response activities.

I have had an opportunity to review the evaluation forms for the October 26 meeting, and was very pleased to see the comments and results. Answers to key questions on the evaluation form are excerpted below:

- New facts to be taken away from the meeting and shared with colleagues:
  - Updated resources from Heritage Preservation and from State Resources (2 responses)
  - How to be prepared for a disaster
  - Involving Local emergency services
  - The various consortia that exist
  - The Disaster Wheel tool
  - A better understanding of "records."

- Parts of the Program of Most Interest to attendees:
  - The local resources that are currently available
  - New (to me) cooperative initiatives and national/statewide initiatives
  - The practical applications such as the Pocket Response Plan
  - The Emergency Management perspective (3 responses)
  - Presentations by David Haury, Jerry Ozog, and Dan Minor
- New contacts of value:
  - I'll have to review everything presented today -- there were many good ideas -- good presenters!
  - The importance of the Local Emergency Managers
  - CCAHA (3 responses)
- Most urgent steps to take in terms of emergency preparedness:
  - Protecting our artifacts and library collections
  - Backing up our library catalog; backup of vital documents
  - Contacting local fire company to walk through our building
  - Getting started on emergency preparedness
  - Creating a concise (version of) our emergency plan
  - Finishing our disaster plan
  - Developing a network in our area for support

There were a number of other important comments on the evaluations and captured by the Planning Committee members after the session:

- One participant said they "can provide Federal Department of Homeland Security information to all participants" (we may utilize this person as a future speaker)
- Participants were asked to rate their change in knowledge in a number of areas as a result of participating in the Forum. None of the respondents said "no gain;" a few said "some gain;" and most said "big gain" in the five areas of knowledge.
- Participants were also asked if they anticipated collaborating with their local emergency management/response agencies and/or cultural institutions as a result of information presented or contacts made at the Forum. One said this was possible, all others said yes, many emphatically (underlines, exclamation marks, etc.)
- A comment to a Planning Committee member after the session was "Congratulations on a job exceptionally well done! (We) really learned a great deal from it and the topic initially did not seem highly appealing to me, I must admit. You had a superb line up of very interesting speakers, a variety of topics, and a broad scope...."
- Another audience comment: "I have attended many meetings and this one was among the best. Kudos to you all!"

While all of this evaluative information is certainly good to have, the most important outcome of the event may have been the interest in continuing activity by the group. As noted in the comment above, we have a Department of Homeland Security representative willing to present at a future session. The audience enjoyed the presentation by Corporal Dan Minor of the Pennsylvania Capitol Police so much that there is strong interest in having him do a half-day program for this audience (that 3-hour presentation, given to Pennsylvania Historical and Museums Commission staff earlier in 2009, was the impetus for inviting Corporal Minor to speak at the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting). In addition, speakers reported on upcoming training offered by the Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records initiative (IPER), the National League of Cities and FEMA, and the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. which will happen in the Central Pennsylvania Area in 2010, and the Alliance for Response group is a natural co-sponsor for these events.

As the Alliance for Response Central Pennsylvania initiative continues, thanks to the generous support from ACLCP, MUNTERS, and BELFOR, there is some funding which can be used to support future Alliance events in the region, and to keep registration costs either free or extremely low. Again, thanks to all speakers and Planning Committee members for starting this initiative in such a successful manner!