

**Eldercare Strike Team
July Meeting Minutes/Field Trip to Red Cross**

July 6, 2010

In attendance: Pam Baron, Erin McLeod, Iñaki Rezola

Not in attendance: Angela Snyder, Eleanor Seville, Kathleen Houseweart, Jean Clearwater, Mike Day, Sherl Craft, Suzanne Wernicke, Sue Fox, John Overton, James Rafiner, Rik Jimison, Paul Hartman, Sylvia Scott, Barbara Kopp.

The Eldercare Strike Team hosted monthly meetings in 2008-09 to hear presentations from various agencies and organizations involved in disaster preparation and response. The group decided to dedicate some of their meetings in 2010 for on-site visits (field trips) to emergency response locations like County government emergency operations centers, United Way 211 and the American Red Cross, which was the location of the July meeting.

Iñaki Rezola, Senior Director of Response for the American Red Cross Southwest Florida Chapter greeted members and took us on a tour of their award-winning facilities. Built in 1989, three buildings were placed underneath an open-air, covered pavilion. In 2007, they hardened the ceiling and built concrete walls with moveable garage-style doors to further secure the facility to withstand 150+mph winds. There are several classrooms, health and safety, education, community meeting and administrative spaces. We got the chance to peek in on the Sewers & Knitters Group who meets weekly to sew and knit items for children, the elderly and others in need.

After the tour, we convened in the Community Meeting room where Iñaki answered questions and talked specifically about programs that affect seniors.

Under the Health & Safety Services, Iñaki described some of their programs:

1. Lifeline Program – we learned that Red Cross is one of the referral centers for Lifeline calls depending upon the severity, type and locale of the call.
2. First Aid/CPR Training – interesting note: they are also offering dog/cat CPR training...not having animals perform this procedure, but humans reviving their pets.
3. Swimming Safety – a standard offering through time.
4. CNA Programs - this is a new direction based on the growing need for trained certified nurse's assistants. The Southwest Florida Chapter has recently applied to the State to become a certified training center and hopes to have the program up and running by Fall 2010.
5. Caregiving Classes – Iñaki promised to provide more information on this topic, which was of great interest to our Strike Team. It will be forthcoming...stay tuned.

The discussion turned to shelters – both general public and those for special needs. Hurricane Fay and the '09 COAD exercise were eye openers. There was a significant response by elders. Red Cross and Strike Team members realized there would be more resources necessary for managing the sites. In addition to regular intake and processing, there is a need for help with activities, making announcements, and communication.

State standards for SpNS are not mandated or regulated. The group talked about the need to advocate for additional support and attention for the more frail elders being mainstreamed into the general shelters. Iñaki agreed to help with this effort.

The challenges are:

- Limited number of volunteers
- Addressing needs of specific demographic segments (babies, kids, elders, etc)
- Insight and expertise needed for set up of general population shelters
- Improved onsite screening processes (Iñaki is working with the County on this)

Erin and Pam agreed that members of the Eldercare Strike Team could assist by reviewing the shelters prior to filling to assess how well they are equipped to serve the elder population. Professional volunteer Team members could stop by shelters for an hour or two to offer input or, once filled with people, to work with individuals one on one. Iñaki said it was a great opportunity for Red Cross to learn and provide better services to the community.

Pam shared that after Hurricane Charley JFCS staff took shifts at the general shelter at Robarts and it was very helpful – both for their staff and for the people they assisted.

One final point of discussion was creation of a Shelter Kit for Elders. There may be something already pulled together or one could be created from tools available already in existence. This could be a project for the Strike Team to address.

Red Cross board member, Mary Rainey, stopped in to inquire about involvement in the Eldercare Strike Team. Erin will add her to the distribution list and make sure she has all current information regarding meetings and contacts for the Team. Welcome, Mary!

We thanked Iñaki for his hospitality and for sharing information.

**Next meeting:
Thursday, August 12
8:30-9:30am
Emergency Operations Center
1660 Ringling Blvd
County Admin Bldg
6th floor elevator lobby**