Kittitas County Medical Reserve Corps Receives a $15,000 MRC Challenge Award for Public Health Initiatives to Benefit Kittitas County

Ellensburg, WA (March 17, 2015) — Kittitas County Medical Reserve Corps, housed under the Kittitas County Public Health Department, has been awarded a $15,000 Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Challenge Award from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) in partnership with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The award will be used to expand current and previous peer mentoring programs like Teens Against Tobacco Use and Teens Against Pot Smoking to include other issues students may be facing such as substance abuse or bullying.

The expanded peer education model, or Youth for Truth, will continue to address substance abuse issues such as preventing tobacco or marijuana use in our students. The peer education model will also include prevention around other issues, which may be identified in the Healthy Youth Survey. A partnership with schools, prevention professionals, as well as Kittitas Medical Reserve Corps volunteers will continue to use an education model that works and hopefully build sustainability as well as respond to specific issues within our county.

The MRC Challenge Award funds MRC units to carry out innovative projects in their communities that can be replicated on a national level and align with one of four focus areas: disaster risk reduction; chronic disease prevention; partners for empowered communities; and mental and emotional well-being.

“Kittitas County Medical Reserve Corps is part of the national network of dedicated volunteers and leaders engaged in local communities across the nation to strengthen public health, improve emergency preparedness, response and recovery capabilities, and build resilience,” said CAPT Rob Tosatto, Director of the Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps. “In the past year, many Medical Reserve Corps units were on the front lines protecting their communities from public health threats like Ebola and measles, and assisting after natural disasters like the Washington State mudslide and recent severe winter storms. Challenges such as these require innovative solutions for protecting the public’s health that are sustainable and cost effective. The Challenge Awards are an investment in increasing the resilience of local communities by supporting new approaches to reducing disaster and health risks that can be adapted by other units to benefit our nation as a whole.”
Nearly 200 MRC units from across the United States completed the application, and the top 43 most promising applicants received awards totaling more than $600,000 to implement the proposed initiatives. Kittitas County Youth for Truth will begin early this year.

“We have an opportunity to take a program that works, change topics to proactively help our students, and ensure the program’s existence for years to come,” said Kasey Knutson, Health Promotion Supervisor at the Kittitas County Public Health Department and Kittitas MRC Coordinator.

NACCHO has worked with the Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, a federal government agency that oversees the national MRC network, through a cooperative agreement since 2006. For more information on the Medical Reserve Corps, please visit www.medicalreservecorps.gov. If you are interested in volunteering for the Kittitas County Medical Reserve Corps and being a part of the Challenge Award opportunity, please contact the Kittitas County Public Health Department at (509) 962-7515.

About Kittitas County Public Health Department – Kittitas MRC Housing Unit
The Kittitas County Public Health Department is a medium sized local health jurisdiction that serves Kittitas County from the summit of Snoqualmie Pass to the Columbia River in Vantage, Washington. Our mission is to protect and promote the health and the environment of the people of Kittitas County.

About the National Association of County and City Health Officials
The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation’s 2,800 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit www.naccho.org.

###