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**REDI COORDINATES NATION'S FIRST DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
PROGRAM FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

MURFREESBORO, N.C. -
Hindsight is always 20/20.
Just think about the things we
would have done differently in the
days prior to the terrorist attacks
of September 11, 2001.

Consider the steps that could have
minimized the death and suffering
that Hurricane Katrina caused
when it made landfall as a
Category 5 storm, and remember
the impact of the December 26th
tsunami that devastated the lives
of so many half a world away.
No doubt, if we knew then what
we know now, things would be
different. Preparations would be
made to protect assets, preserve
life, prevent suffering and
minimize loss. Systems would be set up to alert the vulnerable of danger, evacuate those in
need and help individuals and families return back to business as usual with the least amount
of calamity and chaos possible: assessing, rebuilding and restoring where necessary.
No one can predict such catastrophes, but many would fare better if potential needs were
identified and addressed *ahead* of time. That's exactly what the Hertford County Emergency
Planning Team (EPT) hopes to accomplish through its participation in the Emergency
Preparedness Demonstration Project.



Staff Photo/STEPHANIE DUFFEY
David Salvesson, PhD. of UNC Chapel Hill and Murfreesboro residents Janice Weaver and the late Lee Demary review maps of Hertford County to identify areas that were adversely affected by Hurricanes Isabel and Floyd during a group retreat. The retreat offered the Emergency Planning Team (EPT) an opportunity to update the county maps based on first hand experience with previous disasters.

The unique pilot initiative, which will take place in six states and Washington D.C., kicked off in North Carolina in February and is designed to help the federal government learn more about how to improve disaster preparedness in disadvantaged communities.
As the first community to participate in this study, Hertford County will serve as a model for Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, and the District of Columbia all of which received designation as a Presidential disaster site in the wake of Hurricane Isabel in 2003.

Coordinated by Roanoke Electric Cooperative's nonprofit subsidiary Roanoke Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) in partnership with FEMA, MDC, Inc., and CURS (Center for

Urban and Regional Studies) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), the initiative focuses on three main goals:

- To involve disadvantaged groups in developing emergency preparedness plans
- To teach community members to protect themselves in disasters
- To create a guide for emergency management professionals, community leaders and organizations across the country who desire to increase disaster awareness and preparedness among disadvantaged groups in their communities.

Members of Hertford County's EPT are a mix of local citizens and governmental officials, representatives from the health care industry, the county's Office of Aging, Emergency Management Services, the Department of Social Services, child care, and educational institutions. With guidance and support from FEMA, MDC and CURS, the Hertford EPT has evaluated and updated area flood maps, offered feedback on geographic and social vulnerabilities and identified area assets that might be of use in preparation and response efforts for future disasters.

Some of the initial results of the EPT meeting include:

- A review and critique of the county's existing emergency preparedness plan and the establishment of the potential for a community voice in that plan
- Interview-acquired information relating to citizens' experiences with previous disasters/emergencies within the county yielding valuable insight into what worked and what didn't in the past.
- Establishment of contact with people who have previously needed assistance as a result of a disaster/emergency.
- Discovery of a town within the county listed on the National Flood Insurance Program website as a non-participating community and the initiation of the process to correct it. (The town is currently in the process of adopting an ordinance, resolution, public hearing etc. so people within the town's limits can obtain flood insurance through compliance with FEMA standards.)
- Identification of potential strategies to improve disaster awareness and preparedness among disadvantaged members of the community.

Over the next two months, the EPT will narrow its focus and develop a proposal to implement its chosen strategies. Up to \$25,000 in project funds will be available to fund the proposal after it passes a review process. Although the EPT's obligation to the Hertford County Emergency Preparedness Demonstration Project runs through November, members will have the liberty to decide whether they will continue in this or a similar capacity. If they opt to continue, they have a strong foundation for future success.

About The Roanoke Center

The Roanoke Center, located in Rich Square, N.C., was founded in 2003 and fosters sustainable economic and community development in northeastern North Carolina by addressing the needs of individual citizens and businesses.

For more information on the agencies and/or organizations in the article, visit: www.roanokecenter.org, www.fema.gov, www.mdcinc.org, www.curs.unc.edu or contact Stephanie Duffey at 252-539-3039.