



FEMA

Press Release/Advisory

FEMA ANNOUNCES NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN THE YOUTH PREPAREDNESS COUNCIL

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced five newly selected members of the FEMA National Youth Preparedness Council (YPC).

FEMA's Youth Preparedness Council was formed last year to bring together youth leaders from across the country that are highly interested and engaged in advocating youth preparedness and making a difference in their communities. The Council supports FEMA's commitment to involving youth in preparedness-related activities, and provides an avenue to engage youth population, taking into account their perspectives, feedback and opinions. Council members will attend a Youth Preparedness Council Summit on youth disaster preparedness and will also complete a Council project with FEMA support.

Young people are capable of playing an important role in emergency preparedness, and have the unique potential to help their communities be safe, stronger and more resilient before, during and after a disaster. Youth involved in preparedness programs are able to effectively spread important messages about preparedness to their family, school and community. By participating in youth preparedness programs, young individuals are empowered to become leaders at home, in their schools and communities.

In its second year, interest in the Youth Preparedness Council has increased based on the number of applications received this year for the five seats available. The five newest members of the Council from across the country have been selected based on their dedication to public service, efforts in making a difference in their community, and their potential to expand their impact as a national advocate for youth preparedness.

The distinguished members selected in 2013 are as follows:

- FEMA Region II: Sophie Friedfeld-Gebaide (*New York*)
- FEMA Region III: Alex Pasculle (*Pennsylvania*)
- FEMA Region IV: Louyankkah Justilien (*Florida*)
- FEMA Region V: Daniel Wernsman (*Wisconsin*)
- FEMA Region VII: Emily Rosenblum (*Missouri*)

The returning Council members are as follows:

- FEMA Region I: Rachel Little (*Massachusetts*)
- FEMA Region II: Gabriela Rodriguez Boria (*Puerto Rico*)

- FEMA Region V: Jason Reed (*Indiana*)
- FEMA Region VI: Jonathan DeLong (*Texas*)
- FEMA Region VII: Nimansha Jain (*Nebraska*)
- FEMA Region VIII: Ashley Houston (*Utah*)
- FEMA Region IX: Divya Saini (*California*)
- FEMA Region IX: Tiffany Espensen (*California*)
- FEMA Region IX: Christian Chowen (*Hawaii*)
- FEMA Region X: Cayman Kirkhart (*Idaho*)

Over the past year, the Youth Preparedness Council members have been promoting preparedness in their communities and across the nation. Several members achieved noteworthy results, including:

- Rachel Little (Region I) authored a FEMA blog post about the importance of preparing for severe weather.
- Gabriela Boria (Region II) developed a preparedness group called REACT that holds “Preparedness Days” and started a Teen CERT program at her school.
- Ashley Houston (Region VIII) was requested to speak about youth preparedness on a panel at the 2013 Institute of Medicine Workshop (to be held in June 2013).
- Divya Saini (Region IX) was awarded the “Disney Friends for Change” grant for her Block Preparedness Coordinator work, and has authored and published three articles about preparedness in the *Palo Alto Weekly Newspaper*.
- Tiffany Espensen (Region IX) developed “Tiffy’s Tip Tuesday” in which she relays disaster preparedness tips via her Twitter account, which currently has 16,880 followers.

This year council members will have the opportunity to participate in the Youth Preparedness Council Summit in Washington, D.C. this summer where they will advise and ask questions on youth disaster preparedness with the leadership of national organizations working on this critical priority. Council members will also determine their Council project and meet with FEMA Community Preparedness staff, who will be their ongoing FEMA support contacts and mentors. Members will also meet virtually with FEMA leadership on a regular basis throughout the year and will provide ongoing input on strategies and initiatives as well as updates on their projects.

To learn more about FEMA’s youth preparedness efforts please visit: www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness.

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FEMA does not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications. FEMA does not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Biographies

Youth Preparedness Council Members (2013)

New Council Members

Sophie Friedfeld-Gebaide

Roslyn, NY

Region II

At the age of 12, Sophie Friedfeld-Gebaide traveled with her family to Cedar Rapids to help with Mississippi flooding relief efforts. At such a young age, Sophie was already being recognized by All Hands, a volunteer organization, for her responsibility and volunteering abilities. After Hurricane Sandy, Sophie and a few of her peers organized several fundraisers that raised more than \$38,000 for All Hands disaster relief funds. She also donated a percentage of her Bat Mitzvah gifts to All Hands. Sophie has been involved in organizing food and clothing drives for local shelters and has created a Facebook group to organize All Hands volunteers.

Alex Pasculle

Delmont, PA

Region III

Alex Pasculle, named “Volunteer of the Year” by *IN Community* magazine, has been actively involved in emergency preparedness since 2010. Alex volunteers as a firefighter, Basic Life Support (BLS) instructor and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). He uses his CPR and first aid skills as an American Red Cross volunteer. Alex is also involved in disaster relief, helping organize a fundraiser with Kids Helping Kids to raise money for the Japanese tsunami victims.

Louyankkah Justilien

Margate, FL

Region IV

Louyankkah Justilien is an active participant in national conferences, workshops and community projects. Louyankkah was a voting delegate at a recent NAACP National Convention in Texas and takes on various leadership roles in school activities. As a trained and certified CERT member, she attends local disaster exercises, participates in CERT community outreach and continues to learn about preparedness through online FEMA and Citizen Corps trainings.

Daniel Wernsman

Milwaukee, WI

Region V

Daniel Wernsman’s connection to youth preparedness stems from his involvement in the Responding to Emergencies and Disasters with Youth (R.E.A.D.Y.) club since 2009. Daniel has taken responsibility for several R.E.A.D.Y. initiatives, including a project that teaches CPR to individuals and local schools. Daniel participated in the Homeland Security’s Faith Based Conference “Creating a Culture of Preparedness Amongst Youth,” gave a presentation on first aid and triage to middle school students and led an effort to collect personal items for a local homeless shelter.

Emily Rosenblum

Wentzville, MO

Region VII

Emily Rosenblum’s passion and dedication to emergency preparedness is demonstrated through her involvement with CERT and other community groups. As a Teen CERT instructor assistant, Emily participates in numerous countrywide disaster exercises, is an active Teen CERT spokesperson and continues to advocate disaster preparedness at her high school. Emily always considers those with learning disabilities and access and functional needs when making decisions during disaster response exercises. She has also volunteered hundreds of hours to helping the

Boy Scouts of America with merit badges and award requirements, in addition to the Sam “Ready I Am” program that educates youth about natural disaster hazards.

Returning Council Members

Council Chair

Jason Reed

Jeffersonville, IN

Region V

Jason is the cadet commander for his Civil Air Patrol squadron and is actively involved in his squadron’s emergency services programs, serving for several years as a search-and-rescue ground team member. He was a first responder for the devastating tornadoes that struck Henryville, IN, in March 2012, working alongside the local EMA departments, FEMA, and many other state and federal agencies. He conducted health and wellness checks in the community, created perimeters around damaged areas and distributed supplies to those affected by the storm. He received state-level recognition for his efforts following this disaster.

Council Members

Rachel Little

Monson, MA

Region I

Rachel is a freshman honor student who is involved in the Massachusetts Governor’s Council as a youth advisor. As part of this group, she participated in Project 351 for the September 11 Day of Service, traveling to Boston to meet with other youth and to participate in several community service projects. Also through the Governor’s Council, she participated in Cradles to Crayons, a group in the Boston area that collects clothing and items for children in need. Rachel works with the Street Angels, helping and caring for tornado survivors and has participated in Care Kits for Troops and Step-Up Day, a mentoring program on youth experience.

Gabriela Rodriguez Boria

Juncos, PR

Region II

Gabriela is a volunteer for her local American Red Cross where she helps organize fire and tsunami drills and collects food and donations for Haiti refugees. She is a member of the juvenile pastoral group at her church and collects canned foods for a local homeless dining center. She is also an active volunteer with the American Heart Association and participates in physical activities that prevent heart illness.

Jonathan DeLong

Austin, TX

Region VI

At age 8, Jonathan began volunteering weekly with a local animal rescue group. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, he helped gather supplies for rescued animals and donated his own toys for kids who needed to stay in the shelters. Following these experiences, Jonathan attended the City of Austin CERT training, obtained his ham radio license and assisted in the communications room at Austin’s Emergency Operations Center during Hurricane Gustav. Last summer, Jonathan was one of 28 youth in Texas nominated to attend a leadership training camp for Teen CERT. Jonathan recently approached his high school principal to establish a Teen CERT program.

Nimansha Jain

Omaha, NE

Region VII

Nimansha is a member of the Ralston Fire Explorer’s Unit, which provides training for fire and medical emergency preparedness and is certified in CPR. She has been elected to the University of Nebraska Medical Center Student Advisory Group, which works with high school students to

promote public health and preparedness messages through monthly community sessions to almost 100 teens. Because some teens could not attend every session, Nimansha started to use social media to help share information from the sessions and get the word out on various volunteer opportunities for youth.

Ashley Houston

Hurricane, UT

Region VIII

Ashley is an outstanding student and, as a member of the Health Occupation Students of America program, has completed the Teen Student Emergency Response Training at her high school. She worked with her family to put together 82-hour packs for all of the members of her household and to create an escape plan in case of fire, flood or other disaster. Currently, she is working with a neighborhood response team where people would be assigned to identify problems and check on neighbors in the event of a disaster.

Divya Saini

Palo Alto, CA

Region IX

Divya participates in the Block Preparedness Coordinator Program and volunteers at local neighborhood emergency preparedness events to encourage preparedness and teach individuals what they should do before, during and after an event. She has developed a Facebook site for emergency preparedness and she is the founder of Movers and Shakers, a teen club designed to keep Palo Alto resilient and to form a stronger bond between adults and teens through earthquake preparedness. Divya was recently recognized with a grant from the Palo Alto School Board to further her efforts in helping teens and others getprepared.

Tiffany Espensen

Burbank, CA

Region IX

Tiffany is a 13-year-old Teen CERT graduate from one of the first classes held by the Julian/Cuyamaca CERT Organization. She has been active in the Teen CERT program, participating in numerous drills and classes, helping teach skills to other youth and promoting CERT in interviews. She currently stars on Nickelodeon’s “Bucket and Skinner” show. She has more than 11,000 Twitter followers and almost 1,000 Facebook likes on her fan page, helping her spread the word through social media. Tiffany will be starting high school and has a black belt in Wushu Chinese martial arts.

Christian Chowen

Laie, HI

Region IX

Christian has participated in two community evacuations in Hawaii because of tsunami warnings. After discovering that the family’s go-packs were insufficient, he updated the family’s packs and kits. Christian is a trainer for Hawaii’s “Feeling Safe, Being Safe” program, working with individuals with disabilities to prepare for emergencies. As a trainer, he helps people to build an emergency backpack and explains why each item is important. He is considering combining his “Feeling Safe, Being Safe” work with the needs of his local high school, which has a significant population of students with disabilities. Christian is a Life Scout who has completed the Emergency Preparedness Merit Badge.

Cayman Kirkhart

Hayden, ID

Region X

For his Eagle Scout leadership project, Cayman designed, planned, organized and publicized “Be Prepared Day,” a community-wide disaster preparedness event that featured a series of classes and demonstrations to educate families about disaster preparedness. This four-hour event required nearly eight months of planning and coordination with personnel from 13 organizations, including: local fire, rescue and police units; the American Red Cross; the National Guard; the Coast Guard Auxiliary; the Health Department; and the Office of Emergency Management. “Be Prepared Day” was featured in the March issue of Boy’s Life.