FEMA Corps Team Joining West Virginia's Fight Against COVID-19

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PHILADELPHIA - A group of young FEMA Corps workers have arrived in West Virginia to pitch in with the state's successful vaccination effort.

FEMA Corps is a partnership between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps program. The partnership is a unique, team-based service program that gives 18? to 24?year?old participants the opportunity to serve communities hit by disaster while gaining professional development experience.

"FEMA Corps is a great way to get real-world experience working a disaster," said Janice Barlow, Acting Regional Administrator, FEMA Region 3. "In this case, they get to work up-close with one of the best vaccination programs in the nation, if not the world. I'm excited for them."

Hailing from Northern Virginia to Southern California, the young people arrived in Charleston last week and hit the ground running on their first day.

After getting their COVID tests, they met the commander of the West Virginia National Guard Rock Branch Warehouse in Putnam County. Later that morning, they learned about FEMA's state mission from the Deputy Field Coordinating Officer of FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) at the National Guard headquarters in Charleston, which serves as the operations center for the governor's Joint Interagency Task Force for vaccine distribution.

Their whirlwind tour of the Kanawha Valley concluded at their final destination in Belle, where the West Virginia office of the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) is based. There, they met with Jenny Gannaway, WV VOAD executive director, then participated in a virtual conference with FEMA Region 3 Individual Assistance leadership in Philadelphia.

Afterward, Gannaway and her staff outlined the FEMA Corps assignment at VOAD, which would help the organization in the management of the statewide network of volunteers working to advance the Mountain State's successful vaccination effort. With a

list of tasks including volunteer engagement and tracking, as well as call center staffing and script development, team members expressed their eagerness to get started.

"We're very excited to get working with VOAD in West Virginia," said Pernell Perkins, of Biloxi, Miss. "We're ready to help with spreadsheets, calls, anything to help West Virginia residents."

Jane Oswalt, of Reston, Va., chimed in: "Being able to support the control of a global pandemic is once-in-a-lifetime work and we are totally motivated to face this challenge."

Gannaway was just as enthusiastic. "I'm looking forward to working with this crew," she said. "We've worked with FEMA Corps teams and I feel like this one will be good as all of them. I love their attitude."

Learn more about FEMA Corps, including how to apply at https://www.fema.gov/careers/position-types/peace-corps-americorps and https://americorps.gov/serve/fit-finder/americorps-nccc/life-americorps-nccc. Find out about WV VOAD and how you can volunteer at www.wvvoad.org. Keep track of West Virginia's coronavirus response at coronavirus.wv.gov. State residents can register for their COVID-19 vaccine at vaccinate.wv.gov.

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.