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***Disaster Recovery Volunteers Needed
-Residents Sought to Man Volunteer Reception Centers-***

Volunteers are needed to aid in recovery efforts in the event a disaster strikes by managing volunteer reception centers in Santa Rosa County. Operated by Help Thy Neighbors Volunteer Center through Santa Rosa County's Emergency Operation Center and emergency support function 15, select volunteers will be responsible for registering field volunteers, evaluating skill sets, providing training and coordinating volunteer placement at one of the county's volunteer reception centers located in Gulf Breeze, Navarre, Bagdad and Pace.

Volunteer reception centers are an important clearinghouse for field volunteers and help to ensure volunteer resources are effective and efficiently dispatched to areas of need when it is deemed safe by officials. After Hurricane Dennis, over 600 volunteers coordinated through VRC's gave more than 23,800 hours helping to place tarps on homes and clearing debris for local residents.

Sheryl Bracewell, Santa Rosa County Emergency Management Director explains the importance of VRCs by stating, "During a disaster like a hurricane, large numbers of untrained volunteers come forward to help. Volunteers not involved in a coordinated effort, though well meaning, can actually become a hindrance when not part of an organized process. Our collaborative planning with Help Thy Neighbors Volunteer Reception Centers can expand our capacity to quickly respond to our residents' needs. The VRCs are an important component in our efforts to be a more self-sufficient community, one that is not dependant on mutual aid which can often take days to arrive."

Activated after a disaster, the volunteer reception centers act as a point of contact and assignment center for individual or small groups of volunteers not affiliated with other volunteer organizations like the American Red Cross and Salvation Army. VRCs are a wonderful way to play a vital role in recovery efforts, particularly for volunteers who may not physically be capable of assisting in the field at disaster sites.

A wide variety of volunteer assignments are available including:

- Communications
- Data Coordination
- Dispatch
- Greeter
- Interviewer
- Medical
- Public Information Officer
- Registration
- Runner Security
- Safety
- Volunteer Identification
- Volunteer Reception Center Director and Deputy Director

Volunteers manning the reception centers should be at least 18 years old and will work full or split shifts between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. when notified of a center opening. Orientation and on-going training will be offered to citizens who can help in these vital roles of disaster recovery. For more information, contact the Help Thy Neighbor Volunteer Center at (850) 983-5223 or visit <http://helphyneighborsvc.org>.