



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPRING MEADOWS ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY HOSTS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS EXERCISE

On June 9th, 2011, Spring Meadows Assisted Living Community in St Helens, Oregon participated in a three day, two state and eight county public health emergency preparedness exercise. The intent of the exercise was to test Federal, State, local and community partner plans to protect our community in a major public health emergency.

Under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Division of the Strategic National Stockpile (CDC/DSNS) program, local public health agencies are responsible for mass distribution and dispensing of life-saving medication. Spring Meadows recently registered with The Public Health Foundation (PHF) of Columbia County Push Partner Program. Through this registry, in a real emergency, Spring Meadows is now trained and capable to dispense life-saving medication to our staff, clients and families while PHF of Columbia County establishes public points of dispensing (POD's) for the rest of our community.

Our participation in the exercise was a great success. Spring Meadows dispensed approximately 100 "doses of medication" in the form of decks of cards with prescription information. Forty-five residents from Spring Meadows and Columbia Hills Retirement participated, as did numerous family and staff members, representing a large portion of the group they'd be serving in a real emergency. An important piece of this drill was that Karen Wood, Executive Director of Spring Meadows and point person for the exercise, was not allowed to review the pertinent information specific to the disaster at hand. This allowed us to replicate the minimal time frame a POD would have to prepare for an actual emergency.

Spring Meadows took an extra step in emergency preparedness by involving local Ham Radio community members and communicating with the county Emergency Management Department via radio instead of phones lines. In a real public emergency, phone lines may be down or so overloaded that they are rendered unavailable for necessary communication. This essential step to emergency preparedness will soon inform ongoing training and exercise capabilities for the other 170+ Push Partners in Oregon and SW Washington. This equipment was purchased by Spring Meadows' Board of Directors in order to better serve their community during emergencies.

Spring Meadows would like to thank Columbia County Commissioner, Henry Heimuller (an observer during the exercise) and an evaluator from the Oregon Public Health Emergency Preparedness division, Eric Gebbie, for evaluating this event and giving important insights and tips for future success during exercises and, more importantly, during an actual emergency. These emergency preparedness exercises are vital to testing and enhancing preparedness at all levels of government, providing consistent nationwide approaches to respond to catastrophic public health emergencies and to quickly dispense large amounts of life-saving medication.

The PHF of Columbia County urges other community service providers like us to join the Push Partner Registry. They help the critical segment of our community that might not be able to navigate the public PODs to receive life-saving medication. Also, private industry agencies that employ large numbers of citizens are encouraged to enroll in order to reduce the number of people arriving at public PODs operated by public health. Reducing the numbers attending public PODs will enable Public Health to better support our entire community.

For more information about the exercise or about the Push Partner Program, contact Anne Parrott, The Public Health Foundation of Columbia County's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator at 503-397-4651, ext. 2022. Spring Meadows is professionally managed by Concepts in Community Living in Clackamas, Oregon – www.ccliving.com



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