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## OKALOOSA-WALTON MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS VOLUNTEERS SAY: "LEAN ON ME."

*Volunteers Offer FREE Service to Help Local Residents Prepare for Hurricanes*



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**FT. WALTON BEACH, Fla.** —The Okaloosa-Walton Medical Reserve Corps (OWMRC) volunteers offer free services to Okaloosa and Walton residents aged 65 and older or with one or more disabilities. The mission of the Lean On Me program is to identify vulnerable populations and provide services to ensure they are prepared in advance of a storm or an emergency.

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County organizes the OWMRC and Lean On Me program.

"The Lean On Me program provides opportunities for our vulnerable residents to be prepared if a disaster strikes," said Dr. Karen Chapman, Director of DOH-Okaloosa. "These are individuals who otherwise may not have anyone nearby to assist them with creating an emergency preparedness plan. Our volunteers are increasing resiliency in our community."

The Lean On Me program has assisted over 120 individuals so far. We want to help more! Services begin when a community member requests a specialized home visit by Lean On Me volunteers. All volunteers are credentialed and background screened. The volunteers schedule a visit with the community member and spend time learning each community member's unique circumstances or needs and tailors a preparedness plan specifically for them. Below are some examples of the checklists they personally review with each resident they visit:

- Medication and/or medical equipment lists
- Checking for hazards in the home that may cause a fall or injury or is a fire hazard
- Pet needs
- Transportation needs
- Shelter information
- Emergency contact numbers

The Lean On Me volunteers can provide a safety net and peace of mind to residents and family members, whether they are older adults, disabled or have a language barrier. If you or someone you know would like to sign-up for the FREE Lean On Me service, please contact Peggy McDeavitt at 850-830-0743. Your information is kept strictly confidential and all volunteers are administered a background check.

If you would like to become a volunteer, please contact us at [HealthyOkaloosaPIO@flhealth.gov](mailto:HealthyOkaloosaPIO@flhealth.gov) to join!



### **About the Okaloosa-Walton Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)**

MRC units are community-based and function to locally organize and use volunteers who want to donate their time and expertise to prepare for and respond to emergencies and promote healthy living throughout the year. Lean On Me is one of MRCs programs.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

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