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HURRICANE HARVEY CERT VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PICNIC

Dallas, TX –On Sunday, October 1, a special picnic will be held for more than 180 volunteers and their families who staffed the four evacuee shelters for Hurricane Harvey over the past six weeks.

The volunteers being recognized are all CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) volunteers. These are people who voluntarily give their time to assist in emergency situations including shelter operations.

CERT volunteers were responsible for many tasks in the shelters--from setup to management. They worked alongside other agencies such as Red Cross in assisting the evacuees.

Their impact was obvious. Giving their time and utilizing their training, they were able to assist with food service, facility operations, and volunteer management, among other duties.

Take for example the Walnut Hill Recreation Center shelter. During the nine days of operation, CERT volunteers rendered a collective total of 1,345 hours. They were involved in shifts around the clock, everyday.

Keep in mind this is just one example. Simultaneously CERT volunteers were staffing the centers at Samuel Grand and Tommie Allen.

This event will include not only Dallas CERT volunteers but those from throughout the North Central Texas region.

When the need for the mega shelter became obvious, a callout was made to our neighboring CERT teams. They responded with such enthusiasm, in such large numbers, and with professionalism.

Beyond Dallas CERT volunteers, neighbor CERT volunteers from McKinney, Allen, Plano, Rowlett, Irving, Midlothian, Ennis, Hurst, Cedar Hill, Parker County, Sachse, Duncanville, and Bedford will attend Sunday's picnic.

Hosts for the picnic include the City of Dallas Office of Emergency Management, Rowlett Citizen Corps Council CERT Program, and Dallas CERT Inc., a nonprofit supporting emergency preparedness in North Central Texas.

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About the CERT program:

During a natural or man-made disaster, teams assist emergency response teams in damage assessment, accounting for residents and securing quick, accessible routes into their neighborhoods. CERT teams also support public safety professions by searching for missing persons, assisting at public events and other support functions that enhance Emergency Management.

The CERT program is under FEMA and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks. Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters is built and enhanced.

At the same time, the CERT program was designed as a grassroots initiative and specifically structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suits their communities. CERT volunteers are trained to respond safely, responsibly, and effectively to emergency situations, but they can also support their communities during non-emergency events as well. There are over 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program.

Dallas CERT training emphasizes personal accountability for self, family and community by stressing the importance of personal preparedness and accountability. Prior to an emergency, CERT members are expected to have an awareness of their own neighborhoods, and to pre-determine possible evacuation sites that will facilitate effective, safe and rapid response to emergencies. CERTs are provided 24 hours of training initially with ongoing education and information throughout the year. In Dallas, the CERT program is coordinated by the Office of Emergency Management. More information is at www.dallascert.com

The Rowlett Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a volunteer group of citizens trained to be self-sufficient for up to 72 hours after a large-scale disaster or emergency. Volunteers (135 members) receive training in topics such as light search and rescue, medical operations, triage, fire suppression and utility control. For more information, go to <http://www.ci.rowlett.tx.us/index.aspx?NID=193>.

Dallas CERT Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization which helps support preparedness programs and training, fund projects, programs, and equipment, promote CERT community disaster preparedness, and collaborate and support the City of Dallas and surrounding cities to prepare our part of Texas. The mission of Dallas CERT Inc. is to provide CERT tools, supplies, and information to be utilized in making our community prepared and to adequately respond in the event of an emergency. More information can be found at www.dallascert.org.