For Immediate Release

**MCHD’s Joe Klass accepted to Homeland Security’s Emergence Program**

MORGANTOWN, WV (June 24, 2019) — Joe Klass, MPH, Threat Preparedness Specialist for Monongalia County Health Department, is one of 32 individuals from around the country who has been accepted into the upcoming two-week session of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security’s Emergence Program.

The program, geared to public safety and homeland security professionals early in their careers, provides participants with an “educational forum and innovation lab for participants to explore ‘emerging’ trends in the world around us,” including technology, social matters and terrorism, according to CHDS website.

“When talking about preparedness or response, you can never know too much,” Klass said. “It’s very important to see how other people look at things. The advantage of this program is going to be a new way to solve problems and challenges.”

The Center for Homeland Defense and Security is located at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. The two weeklong sessions will take place beginning at the end of September and then again in mid-January 2020.

According to the Emergence Program’s website, sessions will include a mixture of interactive and informative presentations, discussions and group exercises. A large portion of the training includes an innovation lab for participants to research and develop an idea for change within their organization, such as a new policy, approach, program or procedure, etc.

When Klass applied, he wrote of his interest in utilizing public health expertise in emergency response, “so people and public safety professionals can have a better understanding and more effectively utilize public health during a response.”
He also discussed potentially expanding a new program being developed at MCHD Threat Preparedness called Threat Prep University, which would allow community members to take classes with various first responder organizations to learn more about how the system works and what they can do to help their community.

A native of Rye, New York, Klass has a master’s degree in Occupational and Environmental Health from West Virginia University’s School of Public Health. He’s also a paramedic who works part-time for Mon EMS and volunteers for Star City VFD. He graduated from Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania with an undergraduate degree in history and a minor in international studies.

As part of his role as Threat Prep Specialist, Klass teaches classes to the community and first responders on several topics, including CPR, how to apply Naloxone to someone suffering an opioid overdose and Stop the Bleed, a national awareness campaign that teaches bystanders how to help out in an emergency.

Klass noted that the Emergence Program will help him with those activities.

“Part of Threat Prep is promoting education to the public and empowering them to take action,” he said.

MCHD’s Threat Preparedness program coordinates the state’s Northern Region Preparedness Action Coalition Team (PACT), which includes Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Harrison, Doddridge and Taylor counties.

Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer, completed the four-week Executive Leaders Program at the Naval Postgraduate School in 2018.

“Sometimes, public health is overlooked in discussions regarding Homeland Security, however if you look at the top ten FEMA threats, Public Health has a role in all of them,” Dr. Smith said.

“From flooding to terrorism, society needs individuals who are trained to respond and can adapt to changes as the landscape of these threats evolves. Monongalia County Health Department is thrilled to have representation into this prestigious training program. This is an investment in the future of people who can help take public health and public safety to the next level.”

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