

MSW/MS-DRL student hosts emergency preparedness fair

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LaRacheal Lacy

LaRacheal Lacy, CCISM, began her career as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) specialist for the U.S. army, where she focused on response and recovery. After serving there for nearly a decade, she began a new career as a civilian emergency manager.

“Over time, I realized that something critical was missing from traditional emergency response: attention to the social and emotional well-being of survivors. I began to question how pre-disaster social structures and mental health influenced recovery outcomes,” Lacy said. “This reflection led me to a deeper conviction—social work must have a seat at the table in disaster response. Integrating social support with emergency management is essential to building true community resilience.”

Now, she works as the Emergency Preparedness and Project Coordinator at Dallas Love Field Airport while pursuing her dual [Master of Social Work and Master of Science in Disaster Resilience Leadership \(MSW/MS-DRL\)](#) part-time. Through her role at the airport, Lacy is working to improve accessibility in emergency planning and response in Dallas and beyond.

“One of my goals is to collaborate with our local emergency management team to install signage and QR codes throughout the airport that encourage travelers to stay aware of their surroundings and sign up for emergency alert systems,” Lacy said. “Disasters don’t discriminate based on residency—ensuring that tourists are informed can help them better plan and respond if a crisis occurs.”

Her current project is [Ready Fest](#), a National Preparedness Month event hosted by the airport for Dallas-Fort Worth residents. The free event will provide the public with practical tools and knowledge for emergency preparedness. At the fair, residents will be able to build emergency kits, create evacuation and emergency plans, and connect with local disaster resilience and support resources. There will also be free food, raffles, and family-friendly activities such as bounce houses, helicopter displays, and a ‘Touch-a-Truck’ station where guests can interact with emergency response vehicles.

“The long-term vision of Ready Fest is to foster public trust, strengthen relationships between the community and local organizations, and ultimately build more resilient neighborhoods through sustained collaboration,” Lacy said.

As a disaster resilience leader, Lacy feels it is her responsibility to not just respond to crises but build community trust, knowledge, and infrastructure to ensure communities have what they need before a disaster happens.

She says her MSW/MS-DRL courses, like [Dr. Jamie Ingram](#)'s Diversity and Social Justice class, informed how she advocates for thoughtful and inclusive preparedness, from language inclusivity and ADA compliance in emergency plans to mental health support after an event. When planning Ready Fest, she made an intentional effort to include and support residents of all backgrounds, emphasizing collaboration over differences.

"The Disaster Resilience Leadership program is especially valuable because it includes students from diverse backgrounds who openly share their experiences," Lacy said. "Along with knowledgeable professors who bring insights from government and non-governmental agencies worldwide, this diversity enriches learning and prepares students to make a meaningful impact."

Lacy says the most important piece of disaster management is working with a community to identify their needs. Community members should not just be handed an emergency plan; they should help create it.

"I believe marginalized communities deserve to see people who look like them involved in the planning process—advocates who truly understand their needs and fight for their inclusion. While changing the world is a big goal, I'm committed to making a meaningful impact in my communities every day."

Dallas Love Field Airport's Ready Fest will be held on September 13 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Learn more about the programming [here](#).

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