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Not Shaken During Quake Drill

Cathy Dausman



"Duck and cover" starts in Carla Unroe's classroom
Photo Cathy Dausman

It was business as usual in Carla Unroe's third period Spanish class until the word came to duck and cover ("terremoto" is "earthquake" in Spanish). One student took his job so seriously that he became wedged underneath his desk and needed help getting out. The students then grabbed their backpacks (a concession because this was a drill; in a real emergency they'd leave their possessions behind) and headed to the football field with the rest of the student body. Teachers hung green door markers ("all accounted for") before heading out; if a student was injured or unaccounted for the teacher stayed behind and hung a red marker.

Three students had mock injuries that added to the realism. Senior Nick Read suffered a broken neck and was strapped to a head board. Madison Gibson supposedly broke her ankle during the earthquake and Danielle Meyer was cut by glass going to Gibson's assistance. Fortunately, those students were "injured" at Miramonte High School, where a portion of John Grigsby's Sports Medicine students acted as a medical triage team. Grigsby says his students learn CPR and are first aid certified.

Once on the field, classes assembled with their teachers, and attendance was taken again. The drill finished smoothly, thanks to "a great deal of planning and coordination across the school and wider community," says McAlister.

Over 8.6 million Californians participated in this year's Great California Shake Out (<http://www.shakeout.org/>), up from 7.9 million participants last year. U.S. Census figures for 2010 show the state's population at 37,253,956; meaning roughly 25 per cent of Californians participated. After the Hayward Fault jolts felt around the Bay Area later that day, maybe even more will get involved next year.

Over 1200 Miramonte High School students, faculty and staff took an hour last Thursday morning to duck, cover and evacuate their classrooms as participants in this year's Great California Shake Out, an earthquake preparedness program.

While other Lamorinda schools also participated (Campolindo High School ran a "duck and cover" drill, Orinda Police Chief Jeffrey Jennings visited Glorietta Elementary School, and an Orinda police detective was sent to Orinda Intermediate School), this was the real deal.

Associate Principal Michael McAlister introduced himself: "Hi, I'm Incident Commander today." That meant McAlister, FRS (Family Radio Service) radio and "go bag" at hand, was in charge. He was accompanied by Dennis Rein, of the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD), and Tom Chan, Orinda Citizen's Corps Council. Science teacher and amateur radio operator Dan Shortenhaus checked in to the Orinda city emergency communications frequency, saying he felt the drill went well.

From the start, McAlister expected good things: "Miramonte is a culture of care," he said, explaining that everyone would look out for each other.



Students applied a backboard and C collar to a simulated victim who was hit by a falling light fixture Photo Dennis Rein



From left: Lois Halls, Emily Reichardt and Teena Rigal confer on the field Photo Cathy Dausman



Students from Unroe's class, from left: Unroe's class: Jake Woodlee, Jonathan Chan, Matt Moran, Zach Barber and Steven Shepard Photos Cathy Dausman



Senior Nick Read (on brace board) being treated for a "broken neck"

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