Community Emergency Response Team By Becky Kim, with Sophie Braccini

ord is quickly spreading of the tri-city Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), which is actively leading motivated Lamorinda residents in a quest to become more efficient volunteers in case of a disaster. After a major event, remote suburban communities could have to wait for five days or more before outside help arrives. Most of us realize that the question is not, "Will there be a big one?" but rather, "When?"

The primary reason for CERT training is to give people the decision-making, organizational, and practical skills to offer immediate assistance to family members, neighbors, and associates

while waiting for help. While people will respond to others in need without the training, the goal of the CERT program is to help people do so effectively and efficiently without placing themselves in unnecessary danger.

In only 20 hours, spread over 6 weeks, the course offers training in a variety of situations: from dressing a wound and helping the severely injured, to safely entering a building knowing simple household hazard mitigation. A big part of CERT training is about organizing a search team, planning a simple rescue mission and assessing neighborhoods so limited resources are applied efficiently.

Gordon Nathan, a teacher of CERT commented, "We are ready but not as ready as we'd like to be. CERT benefits the community; people who go through CERT training have a better understanding of the threats."

Without the community support for an organization that could prove to save hundreds of lives, a near-future incident could hit Lamorinda and leave the efforts of the community fruitless. Go to lamorindacert.org for details and schedule of classes. In our next issue we will present responses from Lamorinda residents. If this topic strikes you, feel free to send your comments to editor@lamorindaweekly.com



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