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Patti Young: An Orindan Sowing Seeds of Preparedness

By Laurie Snyder



Patti Young briefed Orindans about plans for the annual Night Out program at the Orinda City Council meeting July 15. Photo Ohlen Alexander

asked to join the Orinda Citizens Corps Council. "You keep branching out from one volunteer thing after another. Working together towards a goal, helping others in the process is fun - and it exercises the brain."

Now co-chair of the OCCC, she holds a radio operator's license, and is active with the Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group. Young and her fellow CERT members have even helped local cat and dog lovers learn how to incorporate their furry family members into their emergency plans.

"I guess it's just knowing other people will be better prepared so that if something does occur, we will all be able to help one another. And the more people that are trained, the better it will be for everyone. It will make the next big emergency that much easier to handle." According to the 2007 Working Group on California Earthquake Probabilities, "Scientists have determined that the chance of having one or more magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquakes in the California area over the next 30 years is greater than 99%."

For those still on the fence regarding whether or not they have the time or technical expertise to be of use in emergency situations, Young has this message: "You might not be able to get someone out from under the rubble by yourself, but you can help calm victims of fire or other disasters, and let them know they're not alone." And getting to know your neighbors and your neighbors' neighbors better through Night Out and other similar events can only help make that kind of caring easier when the time comes.

"I was in the Oakland Hills firestorm, and we lost our house." Even now, nearly a quarter century later, those words send sympathetic shudders through anyone who grew up in Orinda or lived nearby in 1991. Twenty-five people lost their lives that terrible day and 150 others were injured while thousands more morphed from homeowner to homeless in a heartbeat.

Patti Young knows those statistics all too well. She was one of those whose homes were claimed by the fast-moving brush fire. "You really get to know who your friends are; they're willing to give you food and clothing."

Now officially a longtime Orindan of more than two decades, she is known by many fellow residents as the coordinator of Orinda Night Out, a series of neighbor-to-neighbor events held annually to educate citizens about crime prevention and emergency preparedness strategies while fostering increased community camaraderie.

A dental hygienist by profession, she credits her brothers for sparking her interest in public safety. "My brothers kept telling me they wouldn't be around to protect me forever." Taking their "be prepared" urgings to heart, she pursued martial arts training and later learned how to backpack.

Like many Orindans, she got her civic engagement start with the schools and scouts. She also began taking Community Emergency Response Teams classes, became an instructor, and was then

Like Gwendolyn Brooks, Young knows that Orindans "are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond."

Emergency Preparedness Resources

Lamorinda CERT: lamorindacert.org

The Community Emergency Response Team program helps train people to be better prepared to respond to emergency situations in their communities. When emergencies happen, CERT members can give critical support to first responders, provide immediate assistance to victims, and organize spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site. CERT members can also help with non-emergency projects that help improve the safety of the community.

K6ORI Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group: www.groupspaces.com/K6ORI

Emergency communications team serving Orinda and neighboring communities. Volunteers assist with earthquake preparedness training and drills, help to keep crowds safe at Orinda's annual Fourth of July Parade and Moraga's Triathlon and Pear Festival, and work with local amateur radio operators to keep skills fresh and test equipment to ensure readiness in times of emergency. All who are interested in emergency communications are welcome to participate.

Pulse Point: www.pulsepoint.org

Smart phone application which sends an alert when a victim of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is in the vicinity and needs help, enabling citizens who are trained in CPR to render assistance until paramedics arrive.

Additional ways to stay connected: Orinda neighborhood sites on Nextdoor.com, the Orinda Police Department's crime tip email address, and Nixle (www.nixle.com), the emergency alert service used by Lamorinda communities to send emergency alerts or breaking news to residents via text message or email. For more information, visit the city's website, www.cityoforinda.org.

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