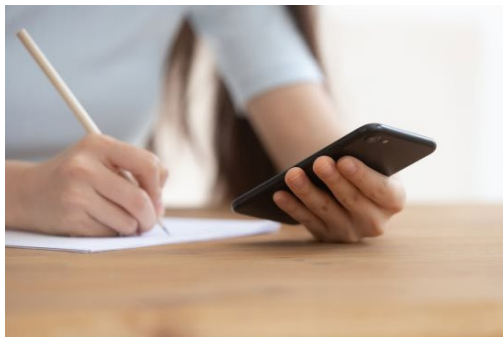


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Rescue One Foundation reaches out to local high school students

By Nick Marnell



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The Rescue One Foundation, an adjunct nonprofit organization to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, is sponsoring an essay contest on innovative uses of technology to increase the effectiveness of emergency evacuation notifications within the district's jurisdiction. The contest, aimed at local area high school students, features a \$500 college scholarship prize and runs through April 30.

According to Fire Chief Dave Winnacker, most district evacuation scenarios involve a partial evacuation due to limited street capacity, with the concern that a mass evacuation notice would create major traffic delays and put residents at increased risk. Thus, limited evacuations are prioritized and time-phased in order to first contact those nearest the threat before streets become congested.

"The purpose of this essay contest is to identify new and innovative ways to contact residents in the event of an evacuation," Winnacker said. Current evacuation notifications include phone calls to a landline, or phone calls, texts and emails to residents who have registered with the Community Warning System. The district conducted wildfire evacuation drills in Moraga in 2018 and in Orinda last year.

"Who knows more about technology than our young people?" said Gordon Nathan, Rescue One president. "Maybe they saw something during our evacuation drills and were hesitant to bring it up, or didn't know where to bring it up."

Rescue One officials have contacted the Acalanes Union High School District with contest details, and the school district plans to schedule wildfire evacuation presentations by the fire chief to the students at Campolindo and Miramonte high schools.

The essay contest is open to those who attend either an Orinda or Moraga high school, local residents who attend a high school out of the area or district home-schooled high school students. The winning submission will be judged on ease of implementation and effectiveness of the evacuation proposal. An application and contest details are available at the Rescue One website.

"Evacuation is a real concern to our public, and picking the brains of our students for evacuation ideas that could give us better drills that can save lives will put us on a clear path to fire safety," Nathan said.

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