



HOLLY PHIPPS — Seaside High School

Members of the Community Emergency Response Team programs at Seaside and Astoria high schools carefully prepare a victim to be transported during their final exercise to become certified in basic CERT training. The victims were played by students from Seaside High School's drama department.

CERT: 'They need to get as close to the real situation as possible'

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lacerated. Unger had instructed her drama students prior to the exercise to take it seriously, not only because they were being graded based on their performance, but also to help out the student CERT members.

"They need to get as close to the real situation as possible," Unger said.

The CERT members also were tasked with communicating with Howe and one another, treating the victims' injuries and transporting them safely to the triage area. Howe was selected as incident commander because she excelled at a previous tabletop exercise that tested the leadership capabilities of different students posing as incident commanders.

The objective of the exercise, said Jeremy Goldsmith, Seaside's RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) AmeriCorps intern, is that "we want to see (the students) physically do what we've taught them." The exercise was the main component of their final, outside of taking a written test, and it was the most important.

"Once they do this, they will be certified in basic CERT training," Goldsmith said.

Three pilot programs

He and Nick Sund, a RARE AmeriCorps volunteer and an emergency services coordinator for Clatsop County, led three pilot CERT programs at Astoria, Seaside and Warrenton high schools. At Warrenton, they held the class twice per week for nine weeks, so the students had their final in March. In Astoria and Seaside, the class was once a week until the last month, when they went to two classes per week to expedite the process.

Sund and Goldsmith, who were trained as instructors through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, offered the training this semester as a sort of "pilot program" at the three county schools. Their hope is the schools now will individually take over their programs and continue to offer them in each location.

"It's been awesome," Goldsmith said of the experience leading the programs. "It's been incredibly rewarding."

'Banana'

Todd Newton, from the Warrenton CERT, and Gale Scobie, from the Astoria CERT, volunteered to help monitor and shadow the students while they performed their assignments.

The group selected a safety word, "banana," for when something in real life had gone wrong and the exercise needed to temporarily stop, but it was never used. After all the victims were rescued and treated, the group debriefed and talked about what aspects could be



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Astoria High School seniors Jordan Gagnon, center, and Brandon Hall assess and treat "victim" Jacqueline Hernandez during a mock search-and-rescue exercise that was put on as part of the final for the Community Emergency Response Team programs at Astoria and Seaside high schools.

improved upon. Most of the players, including the pretend victims, said the simulation illustrated ways communication could be better in the future.

That was an area that was lacking during the simulation, Howe agreed, from a leadership perspective. The hardest thing about the activity for her, she said, "was getting people to get back to me." She recognized, though, that taking emergency response from an abstract topic in the classroom to a real-world activity presents new challenges for the students. The activity is removed from two-dimensional tabletop exercises and lectures to a three-dimensional space, where the students have to look out for problems and challenges below, beside and above them.

"I think they did a good job

with it being our first practice," Howe said.

Scobie agreed communication often is a persistent problem among response teams and nearly impossible to perfect.

"That's usually the biggest issue," he said. "You never can get it as good as you'd like to see it."

Seaside freshman Elijua McShirley said the final exercise was his favorite part of the program because it was more life-like and they were able to apply what they learned in the classroom. He also enjoyed doing tabletop exercises during class and felt like the team improved from doing those to participating in the final. Overall, he said, he liked the program because "it's fun to do, and it's a learning experience." It also trained him

how to react during an emergency scenario.

"It's more important to help with the relief process and not just be the one evacuating," he said.

Howe doesn't intend for her training to stop now. She and fellow Seaside junior Silvia Avila are planning to take a Train the Trainer course to become certified to teach others and then start a CERT program in Seaside for their senior Pacifica Project.

"We just think it's something everyone should know," Avila said.

They are in the planning process and are fundraising to purchase backpacks with supplies for team members. For more information, call Seaside High School at (503) 738-5586 to speak with Avila or Howe, or email Avila at silvia.yesenia@outlook.com.

Council: Estrada challenged the city's rationale

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Two cutters — the Steadfast and the Alert — are now based at the 17th Street Dock. The city is obligated to provide the Coast Guard with 250 parking spaces, either at the parking lot near 17th and Duane or at other locations.

Nenlowill said she was concerned that "giving out a lease on this property could lessen our prospects for a great economic development project in expansion of the Coast Guard in Astoria."

Dissenting vote

But Councilor Drew Herzig questioned why the city would lease property to the Bowpicker, but not to Estrada.

"If the whole lot is Coast Guard parking, then the Bowpicker has to go, too," said Herzig, the only dissenter in the council's 4-1 vote against Estrada's request. "I just don't see how we can permit one to be there and another not to be there."

Herzig called it "sheer obstinacy."

Estrada also challenged the city's rationale. She said she would agree to move if the city needed the property in the future for Coast Guard parking.

"I'm at a loss as to why the city would provide a lease to the Bowpicker and not provide a lease to me," she said.



Drew Herzig

The Bowpicker

Linda Ford, who owns the Bowpicker with her husband, Ron, said the business has tried to be good neighbors since obtaining an agreement with the Columbia River Maritime Museum to use the land. The Bowpicker has a 10-year lease with the city.

"We're not trying to step on anybody's toes," Ford told the council. "We try to be very mindful of the Coast Guard and respect their needs."

Estrada's idea has gotten attention, and the city is likely going to have to referee similar disputes as other entrepreneurs try to take advantage of Astoria's growing popularity as a tourist destination.

"You have a great idea," Price told Estrada. "And there are a couple of other spots in town that people are thinking of opening up."

For Estrada, that was not much of a consolation. "What can I say," she said in an email after the vote, "discrimination is an ugly thing."



Linda Ford

Corps: Suit asks court to review Corps' studies

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properly considered and given priority."

The lawsuit was filed last week in U.S. District Court in Portland. A spokeswoman for the Army Corps in Portland said she had not seen the details of the lawsuit and declined to comment.

The suit asks the court to review the Army Corps' vetting of the Walmart project under the federal Clean Water Act, as well as a review of the Army Corps' environmental impact analysis

and finding that the project would have no significant impact.

The suit alleges the Army Corps allowed Walmart to fill wetlands and ruled out alternative locations for the project without sufficient examination and analysis.

The Warrenton City Commission also approved the project.

Clatsop Residents Against Walmart has claimed Walmart has negatively impacted other communities and would hurt Warrenton, mostly by undercutting local retailers.

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