



Sue Cody

Kaden Gasser builds a tower out of hula hoops at the emergency preparedness event Sept. 16.

Event focuses on emergency preparedness

By SUSAN CODY
Special to *The Daily Astorian*

Against the national backdrop of fires, hurricanes and floods, NW Natural held its annual event to highlight National Preparedness Month, Sept. 16, at the Astoria Armory. This year, it partnered with the kickoff campaign of United Way of Clatsop County (UWCC) to focus on emergency preparedness.

"Most people are not ready for an emergency" says Teresa Brownlie, Community Affairs manager for NW Natural in Clatsop County.

Activities at the Armory

As kids climb on big foam blocks, slide on inclines, glide across a balance beam and get faces painted, parents were getting the low-down on how to keep those kids safe in emergencies. About 250 people turned out for the activities. Tables of social service agencies supported by United Way and emergency service groups lined the gym, handing out the information families need to know, along with some helpful swag. NW Natural's "Get Ready" reflective string backpacks with a light stick, whis-

tle and emergency survival blanket, will come in handy, along with information on how to turn off gas and water.

"There are certain things to think about, such as all the things in your basement that might flood," says Brownlie. "It is a good idea to have some emergency supplies on every floor, because you don't know where you might end up."

Clatsop County Emergency Management gives out earthquake and tsunami material that includes a sign for people to post in their window: red with "help" on one side and green "OK" on the other, to help out rescuers.

Awareness and some history

Clatsop County has had its own brushes with disaster. The Great Coastal Gale of 2007 hit with hurricane-force winds that knocked out power, phone service and kept the area cutoff from the rest of the state because of downed trees and power lines. Many were without power for a week and cellphones were useless for a time. The *Daily Astorian* had to be published in Longview, Washington, because of the lack of power.

"Just seeing what the 2007 storm did in Clatsop County, showed how resilient

this community is," says Jennifer Holen, executive director of UWCC. "Many of us have become complacent, and put the idea of preparedness on the back burner. We don't think about it."

"Then we see disaster in another part of the country and we see this is a very timely conversation," Holen says. "We have amazing resources and we want people to have access to them."

United Way raises funds for 14 agencies, such as Clatsop Community Action, Lunch Buddy Mentoring Program, Helping Hands, Camp Kiwanilong, etc. The United Way campaign goal this year is \$250,000. For information, see: <http://www.clatsopunitedway.org>

The Way to Wellville and its sponsor, Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization support healthy activities and emergency preparedness. "We are all in this together," Brownlie says.

Looking around the Astoria Armory, Holen says, "I like seeing the community come together — living united, bringing everyone to the table. We want a safe, healthy community for all."

Susan Cody is the communications lead for The Way to Wellville Clatsop County.

Volunteers are needed as child advocates

By SUSAN CODY
Special to
The Daily Astorian

to learn about what has happened to that child that led them to being in foster care."

Children need a safe, nurturing environment to achieve well-being and self-confidence, educators agree. When families can't provide that, children rely on local volunteers to be their voice in the process of finding a safe, permanent home.

Parents who struggle with drug abuse, domestic violence or mental illness may find themselves in court, where a judge decides if their home environment is safe. If not, some children are put in foster care, while the parents work on becoming healthy.

Children are then assigned a volunteer advocate to look out for them. Most of the children served locally are 5 years old or younger. About 90 children need an advocate, but there are only 40 volunteers. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) become the voice of the child and advocate for the child's best interest throughout a child welfare court case.

"Our middle-class, white-picket-fence instinct is, 'Well, let's just take that child and put her into a happy home, and everyone feels good,'" says Julia Mabry, executive director of Clatsop CASA Program.

"But that's not how it works," Mabry says. "That is not in the child's best interest. The child's best interest is to help the parents be safe and sober so they can continue their attachment and continue to be raised by their parent, if that is at all possible."

"This volunteer work is really rewarding" Mabry says. "It can really make a difference in the life of a child. But it really does take a special person, who is willing

Unsafe homes

Before CASAs are called in, Child Protective Services, through the Department of Human Services, determines if the child is safe at home.

"Parents have to get their life together," Mabry says. "They have to not use drugs, take care of their mental health or whatever they need to do. Some parents do really well, and get their kids back, and some don't. It's really important for us to match the children with volunteers who have shared interests, so they can bond easier."

While the child is in foster care, the CASA visits the child at least once a month and learns what needs, hopes and wishes he has. A CASA's role is to make sure whatever happens is in the child's best interest, Mabry says. For example, she might advocate for more visits with an uncle or someone close to them.

"They might want horseback riding lessons or a bike," Mabry says. "Sometimes it's just little things that make a big difference. What CASAs really advocate for and work on is the child's best permanent plan."

CASA training

Because childhood trauma can affect health for life, Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) awarded a grant of \$15,000 per year for two years for CASA Volunteer Training and Supervision in Clatsop County.

People interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can attend a six-week training program starting Oct. 18 at Clatsop Community College. See <http://www.clatsopcasa.org>

Free
TACO
FEED

SHELA'S FAMOUS TACOS!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH

HUGE SAVINGS!

10AM-4PM

12 MONTHS SAME AS CASH! O.A.C.

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION SALE

20-40% OFF ALL FURNITURE!

J & S

Hours:

MON-FRI: 8-6PM

SAT: 9-5PM

SUN: 10-4PM

Appliance & Home Furnishings

VISA MasterCard

"We Service What We Sell"

503-861-0929

529 SE MARLIN AVENUE, WARRENTON, OR

WALTER E. NELSON CO.
Your local janitorial and paper supply...and much more!

Aura for Bath and Spa

Benjamin Moore

ben

Interior Paints

LET US HELP YOU COMPLETE YOUR FALL PROJECTS!

Benjamin Moore

CHALKBOARD
LATEX CHALKBOARD PAINT
AVAILABLE IN ANY COLOUR

Great for projects and kids!

**2240 Commercial Street
Astoria, Oregon
503.325.6362
www.WalterENelson.com
Monday-Friday 8 am to 5 pm**

Pool, Spa & Fountain • Packing Materials • Cleaning Supplies for Ovens, Grills, Carpet & Upholstery • Vehicle Cleaning Products