

Camp Kiwanilong is home base for emergency-focused training

By D.B. Lewis
The Columbia Press

Take care of yourself and your family first. Next, do the greatest amount of good for your neighbors while using the fewest resources.

Such are the standing orders for responding to a local disaster, according to last weekend's training by CERT, the Community Emergency Response Team, a federally funded Citizen Corps program.

Residents from throughout Clatsop County gained community survival skills at Camp Kiwanilong in Warrenton.

CERT, a FEMA program, is offered throughout the United States without charge to participants.

Trainers Kimber Townsend, Wendy Hackman, and brothers David and Dell Weston are themselves volunteer CERT leaders in Polk and Yamhill counties.

The four have held sessions throughout the state about once a month over the last year, adding onto their record of more than 70 sessions in their time working as a training team.

By design, CERT's main

Getting involved

To volunteer or learn more, contact the coordinator in your area.

Warrenton: Sylvia Stephens, 503-791-5547, kg7dpn@gmail.com

Astoria: Ed Hauer, 503-325-8788 or hauer@thehauers.com

Gearhart: Dan Jesse, 503-717-3694 or jndjesse@gmail.com

Cannon Beach: Mary Beth Cottle, 503-880-4425 or mbcottle58@yahoo.com



Photos by D.B. Lewis

Above: Trainees Ken Olney and Stephanie Stahmer look through a simulated town with downed power lines and injured people to make decisions about how to help.

Left: Trainee Ellen Norris of Astoria uses a fulcrum to move a large heavy log while trainers David Weston and Dell Weston coach.

purpose is to prepare citizens to survive natural and man-made disasters. Attendees are taught how to prepare for the worst and are schooled in sound response procedures. Training includes learning how to deal with the "three killers" (bleeding, breathing and shock) and how to use ordinary junk to splint broken bones.

The point of the training

is to help people help themselves and reduce the overwhelming load on professional responders after a big disaster, according to free CERT material online.

FEMA has gone even further with the CERT program by teaching attendees how to form local teams to complement professional responders in the early aftermath of a disaster. The basic training

book – free online - describes CERT as "a bridge to professional responders until they are able to arrive," which could be up to several hours or even days.

Four CERT teams are active in Clatsop County: Astoria, Cannon Beach, Gearhart and Warrenton-Hammond, all comprised of volunteers willing to learn and prepare together, first for their own areas, but also in cooperation with each other when an area needs extra help.

While the CERT movement is growing slowly in Clatsop County, signs of progress are encouraging.

Vince Aarts, Clatsop County Emergency Management coordinator, has expanded his monthly Citizen Corps meeting from CERT leaders only to all area CERT members, all Medical Reserve Corps members, all Disaster Animal Response Team members and even local Red Cross volunteers.

Hopes are high that momentum will pick up in 2019 as the separate programs cooperate for the common good, Aarts said.

Leading the way in local CERT development, the city of Warrenton unanimously passed Resolution 2527 in September to formally recognize its CERT team. More than just an "atta boy," the resolution "supports the mission of Warrenton-Hammond CERT to educate community members on natural disaster preparedness and response, and to work with and supplement existing emergency responders in the event of a major disaster."

D.B. Lewis is information officer for Warrenton-Hammond CERT. He can be reached by leaving a message on 503-741-5977 or by emailing cert@dblcy.net.

Hams donate emergency radio

Sunset Empire Amateur Radio Club donated and helped install an amateur radio at Gearhart City Hall last week.

The radio allows city CERT teams to practice with a more powerful radio and coordinate exercises with Community Emergency Response Teams in other areas. In an emergency, licensed amateur radio operators on city staff, including local CERT volunteers, can use the system to obtain assistance from outside the immediate area.



Courtesy Dana Gandy

Gearhart Councilor Dan Jesse, City Administrator Chad Sweet and Dana Gandy, president of Sunset Empire ARC.

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