

CERT members get recognition

An appreciation of hard work by community volunteers

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette

An appreciation dinner recognized Cannon Beach Community Emergency Response Team volunteers and allowed 26 members from different graduating classes to connect. On the heels of a stormy month and a recent CERT graduation, coordinator Paula Vetter, Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn and Emergency Management Consultant Stacy Burr thanked the team on Oct. 26 at Chamber Hall.

“It’s such a great thing to have all this help for our little police department,” Schermerhorn said, adding that when he was on the East Coast during the mid-October storm, the support of volunteers and city employees assured him that the city was in “good hands.”

Burr said local CERT teams are part of a “bigger picture.” Members across the nation are deployed after disasters or for events like the Olympic trials in Eugene and the Super Bowl, where they provide crowd control and psychological



LYRA FONTAINE/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Michael Diak demonstrates his CERT chant after he is awarded the “Most Enthusiastic Award.”

care. After Hurricane Sandy, 2,500 CERT members were deployed and helped assess damages.

Cannon Beach has 41 CERTs from 18 to 79 years old, including seven couples. Burr recognized various members for their quick thinking and actions during trainings.

CERT will likely start having quarterly meetings to stay in contact, refresh equipment and more, Schermerhorn said. Each meeting could include trainings such as first aid, traffic incident management and ham radio operation. The Cannon Beach team may also work with the county CERT team next spring at Camp Rilea.

CERT members suggest-

ed additional lessons such as water purification systems, managing pets in emergencies, setting up refugee shelters and bilingual language classes.

Though there is a language line that police officers can call for translation, “when phones are down it’s not going to be helpful for us, it would be great to have interpreters,” Schermerhorn said. He is working to involve bilingual residents and open up further communication with the city’s Hispanic community.

Honoring time, commitment

Vetter presented awards to those “able to give their time” to trainings and events.

“By doing this, we will be

empowering our community,” she said. “It’s not just the time that we put in. It’s the impact you make when you’re here.”

Vetter also thanked CERT members for being on standby during the mid-October storm. She said if Manzanita has 70 CERT members and deployed 41 for the recent tornado, “we need more of us so that we can spread the work out.”

The “Enrichment Award” for starting a teen CERT program went to Silvia Yesenia Avila. For her “boundless energy” and leading monthly evacuation walks, Jenee Pearce-Mushen was given the “Best Volunteer Group Effort Award.” County Commissioner Lianne Thompson received the “Helping Hands Award” and Mayor Sam Steidel received the “Citizen Leadership Award.”

Vetter gave the “Above & Beyond Award” to Medical Reserve Corps leader Lila Wickham, for the “significant amount of time she has devoted” and for “sharing her expertise, skills and knowledge with us.”

The “Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award” went to Les Wierson.

“He devotes an abundance of time and energy to our community and has made an enormous impact,” Vetter said.

Chamber leads effort to buy beach-access wheelchairs

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette

Unlike neighboring cities Seaside and Manzanita, Cannon Beach does not offer beach-accessible wheelchairs for visitors.

The Chamber of Commerce and partners Remax Coastal Advantage, Martin Hospitality and Escape Lodging hope to bring sand-friendly wheelchairs to Cannon Beach by next summer. At a City Council work session last week, the city agreed to work with the chamber on the accessibility project, which could mean storing the wheelchairs at City Hall.

Chamber representatives said the wheelchairs would enhance visitor experience and allow beach access for disabled people outside of a vehicle.

“Sadly, not all of our guests are able to experience the magnificent wonder of Oregon because of disabilities,” said Matthew Weintraub, the chamber’s destination marketing manager. “The project needs the city’s involvement to be executed as effectively as possible. One of the major reasons we’d like the city to be a stakeholder and possibly take spatial ownership of these chairs is that you’re in close proximity to the ADA-accessible ramp by the beach.”

The chamber seeks to purchase one adult chair and one youth chair that would be free for public use. The nonmotorized beach wheelchairs have a base cost of \$2,500 each and include 4- to 5-inch-wide tires that keep the chair above sand, Weintraub said.

Mayor Sam Steidel said the project could start small, then grow. Councilors asked about the chairs’ durability, liability issues, grant opportunities and the possibility of business sponsorships.

Councilor Melissa Cadwalader said the goal date of acquiring the chairs by June 20 is within the city’s current fiscal year and not in the budget.

Meeting a need

Though the city allows permits for disabled visitors to drive or be driven on the beach, their experience is “limited to them sitting in place or being carried,” Weintraub said.

Court Carrier, the chamber’s executive director, said he has received a handful of complaints about the city’s lack of beach wheelchairs.

“What a cap for us to be able to say we have made our beach totally accessible to everyone, and have that available in the year of the Beach Bill anniversary,” Carrier said.

Councilor Wendy Higgins said she gets requests at the Ocean Lodge for beach wheelchairs. “It would be nice to

have it in our own community,” she said.

The chamber identified Deming Designs as a possible manufacturer and could pursue funding opportunities from Clatsop County, Travel Oregon and others.

Melisa Colvin of Bronze Coast Gallery wrote a letter supporting the project, noting that her wheelchair-bound father had used beach wheelchairs in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. “It made such a difference for us, at a difficult time, for him to be able to join

the rest of the family on the beach,” she wrote. “I’d love to see Cannon Beach become a place that could make this possible, as well.”

“Cannon Beach is the jewel of the Oregon Coast, and it is frankly an embarrassment that there are no beach wheelchairs available in Cannon Beach for our visitors to access the beaches,” local real estate agent Alaina Giguere wrote in a letter.

The project team will come back to the City Council with more information.



DEMING DESIGNS

The Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce is leading an effort to purchase beach-friendly wheelchairs. A beach wheelchair from Deming Designs is shown.

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