

## Community Emergency Response Team – Lamorinda Weighs In

By Becky Kim, with Sophie Braccini

Of the roughly 58,000 Lamorindans, 235 are certified CERT volunteers. After reading the CERT story in our last issue, supportive Lamorinda residents gave enthusiastic feedback. To train and educate your family is one thing, but it is another to unite with your neighbors and your community. CERT provides training in both personal safety and group survival. Some neighborhoods in our area are already organized, with certified CERT residents and updated information about their own resources, both human and material.

Edy and Jeff Schwartz of Moraga started training in spring of 2006 and have formed alliances within their neighborhood, giving an upper hand to an organized and practical route to safety. “CERT gave us a structure to do the things we had planned to do but never did,” said the Schwartz’s.

When a disaster hits the Lamorinda area, the limited resources will leave people helpless, and it is the combination of safety knowledge and unity that is going to save hundreds of lives. Ellen Beans, an advocate of CERT added, “I remind people that the professionals will not be on hand for everyone. We need to take care of ourselves.”

There is concern among some that CERT participants tend to be older residents, those without young children, even though par-

ents want to do their best to safeguard their families. This may be due to the demanding amount of time required to complete the training (20 hours over 6 weeks). It can be hard to carve out that time, especially when it competes with family obligations.

An anonymous working mother said, “I am aware of CERT and think it is important, but it is not high on my priority list. As a mother of two young children, I feel I have no time for this training. Maybe if CERT was offered through the school system, parents would feel the urge to be ready.”

Frans Hoffman of Miramonte Gardens, one of the organized neighborhoods, explained, “Without training you are going to be a victim of emergency. Instead of being a victim, you can be the rescuer.” On a stronger note, Laura Gilson added, “Almost everyone says they do not have time, but it’s so important that they may want to consider making time.”

Gilson wishes the training would also reach out to her teenagers, both students at Campolindo High. The minimum age to participate in CERT is 18, making the majority of students ineligible.

To sign up for the training that begins on April 19th, go to [www.lamorindacert.org](http://www.lamorindacert.org).



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