

# Life in LAMORINDA



Photo by Jennifer Wake

## For What the Bell Tolls

### Emergency Preparedness at SMC

By Jennifer Wake

The tolling of the Saint Mary's College bells is always a good reminder of the time of day, but Saint Mary's Public Safety Chief Bill Foley says they could be utilized in a new way – to alert the campus community in the event of an emergency.

The idea is one of many being considered by Saint Mary's as part of the college's comprehensive emergency preparedness plan. "Since [the bell] is electronic, we're meeting with the manufacturer of the system to see if we could either do a voice override or could get a distinctive tone that could alert the campus community," Foley said.

The college is also in the final stages of an emergency response website where people can find information about a disaster as well as have the capability to report their status following a disaster. "Families could scroll down through the list to check on students, faculty or staff instead of trying to call in or come to campus," said Foley.

Communication, however, is just one component of emergency preparedness.

"We have a lot of resources that can be utilized in the event of an emergency," Foley said. "The

town of Moraga and the college, as well as Lafayette and Orinda, are reviewing our disaster plans in light of shared resources – what we have, what we can share with one another it it's needed – and that includes spaces. In any sort of disaster in which there is extensive property damage, you start looking for wide open spaces to go."

Areas on campus could be utilized to perform triage, coordinate emergency equipment and supplies, or even house pets and livestock. "It might make sense to use the tennis courts as an animal care area because it's fenced," Foley explained.

Foley meets monthly with local authorities from Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, including the three police chiefs, the superintendent of Moraga schools, and the fire chief, but understands that during a major emergency, considering the size of the neighboring towns, response to the college will be minimal at best.

As part of their overall plan the college's emergency preparedness work group, chaired by Foley, has conducted disaster preparedness workshops and has created a building coordinator program. The program has 26

volunteer staff, faculty and Brothers, who have been trained in first aid, CPR, light search and rescue, and disaster preparedness.

"They have large carry-all bags that contain supplies, food, first aid, flashlights, gloves, and tape so they can do some immediate triaging within an area," Foley said. "We've also started to stockpile general supplies on campus for use in these sorts of disasters or long-term emergencies."

In February Saint Mary's engaged a consulting group to advise it on emergency preparedness and response issues along with local emergency response agencies. The college also co-sponsors Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training on campus, and has scheduled a CERT training specifically for Saint Mary's faculty and staff in October.

Foley says he would like to expand the volunteer base to include students who could work with trained leaders to help with traffic control or even light search and rescue during a major emergency.

When developing any plan at the college, Foley keeps in mind that Saint Mary's is a town within a town. "When you think about it, services come to the front of the gate, and we take it over from there," he said.

## Fire Safety – Share the Responsibility

By Cathy Tyson

With an expected hot and dry summer just around the corner and wildland fires burning in southern California, now is a good time for all area residents to consider what they can do to be as fire safe as possible. Moraga-Orinda Fire District Fire Marshall Tonya Hoover is dedicated to promoting the message, "We believe we all share in the responsibility for our fire safety." There are many attributes that you can change that will have an impact on whether or not your house goes up in flames in the event of a fire. These simple things can give a 50% greater chance of saving a home. "If everyone participated we would all have a much better chance of surviving a wildland fire today."

Moraga-Orinda has a new program called Firewise, a web-based, parcel level evaluation of each individual parcel within the fire district. All the lots within their service area, that includes Canyon, Bollinger Canyon and unincorporated parts of the county,

are evaluated and assigned color-coded levels of risk, green - low, blue - moderate, yellow - higher risk, orange - very high, red - extreme risk. A quick glance at the map shows almost all parcels orange and yellow.

"I'm telling readers, look at the site, call me up and tell me if I'm right or wrong. For example if a homeowner put in a pool, after the area was evaluated, it changes the risk dynamic, providing a broader defensible space. I'll send a capable Firewise inspector out, and we will reevaluate the property, and we'll update the website. I want everyone to check their rating, if you don't agree, call me up and tell me I'm wrong." Hoover encourages all Moraga, Orinda, and Canyon residents to go to the website, [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org) - click on the Firewise link, and read all about it. "Frequently Asked Questions" is a good place to start to learn how to navigate the program. You can also get information from the Fire Prevention office, (925) 258-4525. Reach

Hoover by email to [thoover@mofd.org](mailto:thoover@mofd.org).

Lafayette is served by the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. Robert Davis, Supervising Fire Inspector, says they are working with Moraga-Orinda on their Firewise program, sending out notices to owners of vacant properties about abatement and surveying property owners following up on abatement. Lafayette is unique in that along with Brentwood, it has adopted an ordinance requiring mandatory automatic sprinklers in new homes when the closest fire station is more than 1 1/2 miles from the home.

"Canyon has been the most pro-active of all our communities," says Fire Marshall Hoover. "They have communicated with the California Department of Forestry, EBMUD, East Bay Regional Parks, they've done training exercise, addressed property owner issues and more. They chose to take one bite at a time on that elephant."

### Things you can do to increase fire safety

- Roof – most vulnerable part of the structure, fire resistive roofing is best, Class A and B.
- Defensible Space – Create an area free of seasonal vegetation growth around the structure, for example

- eucalyptus and junipers are very flammable.
- Spark Arrestor for chimneys.
- Address Visible - day and night from the street that the fire department can read.
- Bridge – if your property is over a bridge, make sure it

- meets access requirements – 40 tons.
- Eave and Vent Openings – provide protection from embers intruding; install fire resistive screening with openings less than 1/4 inch over eave openings and vents



Moraga-Orinda firefighters drill regularly



Photos by Andy Scheck

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