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## National Night Out in Lamorinda Aug. 4

By Cathy Dausman



Sitting in a fire truck from Station 15 in Lafayette was one of the highlights for this young Lamorinda resident as part of last year's National Night Out event. Photo Carol Yates

Duncan Seibert each hosted National Night Out events for their respective Lafayette neighborhoods. "We probably lost a lot of steam last year [with attendance figures]," Yates admitted, a fact she attributes to residents on vacation. Still, Yates estimates her event attendance at around 30, many of those out of area visitors. The children and teens, especially, all enjoyed the police and fire vehicle presence, Yates said. She plans to go door to door again, delivering invitations and making it very easy for her neighbors to learn about NNO.

Former Moraga mayor Lynda Deschambault hosted a small group in her Donald Drive neighborhood last year and is hosting again this year, hoping for an even better turnout. "It was great to get the important conversations started," said Deschambault, a CERT member.

Moraga's Diana Graham facilitated the visit of a fire truck, a police car and a town council member, and added some ice cream and associated accoutrements for her neighborhood last year. "Some people had potlucks. It just depends on what you would like to do. My house burned down in the Oakland Hills fire more than 20 years ago," Graham explained, "but every summer it is just like yesterday. It is good to have something that people can take home with them to work up their plan, their kit and to be informed."

Mimi Wilson has promoted National Night Out for Orinda's Lost Valley neighborhood since Orinda started it four years ago. Wilson said their neighborhood, which she describes as one long cul-de-sac, also hosts an owners' association picnic in September. Lost Valley meets at an area barn, where they bring in hay bales. "The kids think it's fun to come to the horses and get their picture taken," Wilson said. Lost Valley events have included candy bar awards for those who recognize which neighbors live in which houses. "We invited Don Gabriel neighbors to join us, [too]," Wilson said.

Don Gabriel used to host its own event but resident Susan Horrocks said they have opted out for the last three years for a variety of reasons, including vacation conflicts and some residents' irregular work hours. Horrocks credits former neighbor Beccie Kunzman for promoting National

Some people consider it a chance to catch up with neighbors on a summer's eve, enjoy tasty snacks and let the kids explore police and fire vehicles up close, but National Night Out also has a serious side. "When disaster strikes Lamorinda our first responders are going to be pushed to the limits," says Moraga-Orinda Fire District Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein. "Residents will need to be able to take care of their own basic needs and help their neighbors. National Night Out is a great event to start planning how you will become better prepared."

National Night Out began in 1984 under the guidance of the nonprofit National Association of Town Watch. That first year, 2.5 million neighbors took part across 400 communities in 23 states. In Lamorinda, various neighborhoods in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda are again hosting neighborhood events, this year on Aug. 4.

Last year, Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commissioners Carol Yates, Sherry Hoover and George Figone and Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team program manager

Night Out through her Emergency Preparedness Commission affiliation.

Recently, Kunzman said, the Orinda Citizen Corp Council has organized the event and promoted get-togethers. "It is more of a Neighborhood Watch and emergency preparedness activity. All three police departments and Moraga-Orinda Fire District are huge supporters," Kunzman said, adding, "I think it is important to get together."

Patti Young is the current head of OCCC. "I think she may have set a record on the number of events she attended last year," said Kunzman. Young believes local participation in National Night Out is an important tool for helping us slow down just enough to spend some time to get to know our neighbors a little bit more. "It is also the perfect time to make lists of those neighbors with special needs and those who have special skills or equipment to use in times of an emergency, such as a tree falling or a fire or an earthquake. This is a good time to talk about communication; who in the neighborhood has FRS/GMRS radios or is a Ham [radio] operator just in case other forms of communication are down," Young said. "Enjoy your neighbors," she added.

Graham emphasized that Lamorinda residents need to be ready. "We need to be organized. We need to help each other to see what might happen in our community. With the fire danger so high this year we want to get the word out on preparedness as much as possible."

To participate in or to form your own neighborhood National Night Out event, email [lamorindanightout@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindanightout@gmail.com) or call Dennis Rein at (925) 258-4599.

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[back](#)

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