

Citizen Corps Names County One of Ten Best in Nation

Seattle, January 23, 2004--Citizen Corps, a program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency within the US Department of Homeland Security, selected King County as one of the ten top jurisdictions with best practices in the nation.

Eric Holdeman, Manager of the King County Office of Emergency Management, has asked Gene Laughlin of Duvall to represent King County at a Washington, D.C. conference of the ten jurisdictions called to discuss best practices in building, operating and sustaining Citizen Corps. Holdeman said Laughlin was selected because of his contribution to local emergency preparedness.

Serving on the staff of Metropolitan King County Council member Kathy Lambert last year, Laughlin was encouraged to organize volunteers into Citizen Corps Councils in Lambert's northeastern King County District 3.

"Once volunteers in the communities established the Carnation-Duvall Council, it seemed reasonable to build a mutually-reinforcing network around us, sharing ideas, programs and resources," said Laughlin. In the past year, in addition to Carnation-Duvall, Laughlin helped start Citizen Corps Councils in Snoqualmie-North Bend, Sammamish, Sky Valley, which includes the string of cities from Monroe out to Skykomish, and, just this past week, Fall City.

Redmond already had a Citizen Corps affiliate, Redmond Community Organizations Active in Disaster, and their facilitator, City Chaplain Pat Hamman, helped Laughlin present the idea to people who lived and worked in Carnation and Duvall.

Laughlin is working to get a Woodinville Citizen Corps Council started; it may get underway in February.

Citizen Corps Councils educate and prepare their communities for disaster. The programs offered by the Councils are Neighborhood Watch, Volunteers in Police Service, Medical Reserve Corps and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Information is available at www.citizen corps.gov.

One of the programs, CERT, started by Los Angeles residents and first responders to better prepare the community for earthquakes, is very much appreciated in rural areas whose residents also cope with the occasional flood, windstorm and wildfire. Trainees learn skills in safety, fire suppression, light search and rescue, triage, basic first aid and sheltering.

Carnation City Council member Laurie Clinton organized CERT training in the Snoqualmie River Valley. "29 citizens were trained this past fall in disaster response skills," said Clinton. "The waiting lists are already building for this year's courses."

Irvina Russell, one of Clinton's graduates, said CERT training gave her the confidence to organize her Duvall neighbors to clear trees that fell in the recent ice storm. Said Russell, "I knocked on doors and told my neighbors that we had better get our road cleared or a fire fighter (my husband) wouldn't be able to get to the fire station. We made quite a racket for a few hours. Those that didn't have chain saws or weren't hauling branches came out with cookies and water. One neighbor even showed up with a tractor."

Just as Carnation-Duvall did, Sammamish Citizen Corps Council is using training techniques and materials used in Woodinville, where Lambert and Laughlin were CERT trained by Dave Leggett, Woodinville Fire and Life Safety Department's education officer. Jan Bromberg,

facilitator of the Sammamish Citizen Corps said fellow Sammamish resident Elizabeth Peterson after being helped by Leggett, led their first CERT training to graduate ten new CERT members. Sammamish will continue the course this year.

Lambert called attention to the other Citizen Corps Councils and affiliates in King County--Auburn-Pacific, Kent, Mercer Island and Shoreline--and said more communities should consider organizing: "I encourage my fellow council members to promote Citizen Corps throughout their King County districts. It's a program that makes our communities safer, stronger and more secure."

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