

Neighbors Helping Neighbors in Blue Lake by Maureen McGarry

On April 17th, neighbors in Blue Lake are gathering for a town-wide disaster preparedness meeting.

“We’re comin’ together!” says Dot Campbell. A long time Blue Lake resident, Campbell has decided to don a new hat- Blue Lake’s Neighborhood Organizer for Disaster Preparedness.

Last November, she attended a Blue Lake City Council Special Meeting at the town’s Fire Station. Volunteer Center of the Redwoods (VCOR) presented at the annual meeting as well as Humboldt State University’s Regional Training Institute and the Blue Lake Fire Department. County Supervisor Mark Lovelace was also in attendance and shared information about the Nextdoor Network- a localized email network initiated by the county. Campbell became interested in the VCOR/American Red Cross Neighborhood Disaster Training that was being offered at the Area 1 Agency on Aging.

When Campbell attended the training in January of this year, she was inspired to go back to her community and get things going. She held a small meeting at her house where the group decided to walk the community with flyers for a community meeting. “It was well advertised. We’d leave flyers at the post office. We posted them at the Grange Breakfast. We were catching people when we could, wherever we were.”

The first community meeting took place only days after the 6.9 earthquake in March. Twenty two people attended at Skinner’s Store. Participants included Lona Manzanita, a Blue Lake City Council member, Blue Lake City Manager John Berchtold, and several interested community members. Pods were established. Campbell describes “pods” as a cluster of neighbors who meet and discuss how to operate during a disaster, share cookies, and design a way to evacuate safely in the event of an emergency.

Campbell knows something about being prepared. She remembers an experience she had several years ago.

“I’ve been in Humboldt County 30 years and seen roads closed because of heavy rains.” She recalls being stuck between Stone Lagoon and Big Lagoon. Others she knew were stuck on the Orick side of 101 or the Trinidad side.

“You’re either out or in. The big questions for many people were ‘Where’s my family? Who has the kids? Are they on higher ground?’ With so many serious concerns, she admits, “It’s a heck of a time to meet your neighbors.”

Campbell says Blue Lake has approximately 1000 people in 500 homes. “Since the last meeting, we have established 8 pods. We want 35.” She is enjoying getting to know her neighbors. “Now I have ten new names in my phone. ”

Campbell’s new role fits in well with her other current activities.

“I am working with elders, and appreciate the need to protect them and care for them first in an emergency. Blue Lake is a garden town that is full of roses planted by the elders and such a sweet place to live. Connecting this community fulfills my need to serve, while seeing our town light up as we deepen our connections with each other.”

For more information about the Blue Lake meeting on the 17th at Skinners Store at 7 pm, contact Dot Campbell at dottess@humboldt1.com. For more information about Neighborhood Disaster Trainings, contact VCOR at 442-3763, or vcor@a1aa.org.



Organizer Dot Campbell