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Hosts Wanted for National Night Out

By Cathy Tyson



Kids enjoyed investigating this police cruiser at last year's Night Out in Lafayette. Photo Carol Yates

potluck, happy hour, ice cream social or barbecue - to rub elbows and meet with special guests. Representatives of the police departments, city councils, fire districts, citizen corps councils, and community emergency response teams are making themselves available to pass along best practices and safety information.

The get together is infinitely flexible and can take place in a back yard, a cul de sac, or even a park, but the key component is getting folks to volunteer to spread the word about the event and make arrangements, even if it's BYO snacks and beverages. In years past, one Orinda neighborhood had a bouncy house to entertain little ones while their parents mingled. Lots of support is available for would-be hosts, including materials, flyers and help arranging for guest speakers from among a wide variety of civic and emergency response personnel.

In Orinda, the Citizen Corps Council wants to help. It offers the assistance of experienced residents to help begin the conversation about how to get organized for emergencies. In Lafayette, the Emergency Preparedness Commission and Crime Prevention Commission can help and even have flyers available to be used for invitations via email. Those on the social network Nextdoor should look for notices of an event. In Moraga, Diana Graham, whose previous home burned in the Oakland hills fire, called the event "really important" and suggested that even hosting immediate neighbors is possible so that the commitment isn't overwhelming. Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein has been working on a wildfire evacuation plan called "Ready, Set, Go," customized for Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, which teaches people who live in high risk wildfire areas - that's all of us - how to best prepare themselves and their property. It will be a centerpiece of National Night Out events throughout Lamorinda.

Patti Young of the Orinda Citizens Corps Council suggests keeping it simple and fun, whatever works for you. She's the contact person for Orinda at pattiyoung1@comcast.net; in Lafayette Carol Yates is the contact person, lepccarol@gmail.com; and for Moraga, contact Graham at dgrahamenv@yahoo.com.

Call it an emergency preparedness block party from sea to shining sea - and Lamorinda is just one of many community links in the chain of National Night Out. This year will be the first time all three Lamorinda communities join other towns across the United States to celebrate National Night Out on the same date, Aug. 5. National Night Out has been around since 1984 to promote neighborhood camaraderie, crime prevention and emergency preparedness.

While getting ready for a disaster may not be everyone's idea of a good time, when the next earthquake, wildfire or burglary happens, homeowners will be glad they spent some time getting to know their neighbors. The idea is to have a casual get together and to make valuable connections in case of emergency.

Organizers in all three municipalities are calling on neighborhoods to host any type of gathering from 5 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 5 - a

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