

Lamorinda is becoming HeartSafe

By Cathy Dausman



Members of Moraga Movers club practice CPR during a recent meeting at Saint Mary's College Photo Cathy Dausman

There's a brand-new "Best" in Lamorinda — that of best possible chance of survival for someone experiencing out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

Moraga, Lafayette and Orinda are becoming HeartSafe communities, joining HeartSafe programs established in Alamo, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Kensington and San Ramon.

"It's all about promoting the chain of survival," says Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein. Rein says out-of-hospital cardiac events are the leading causes of death nationwide and 90 per cent of victims will die without early intervention. But five things — early 911 access, early cardio pulmonary resuscitation, early defibrillation, early advanced life support and integrated post-cardiac care — greatly increase a victim's odds of survival.

"The first three are all things that we can do," he said. Response time is critical, says Rein "even with the best trained emergency responders," because the survival odds decrease 10 percent for every minute the onset of advanced life support is delayed.

Local support for the program comes from Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, Contra Costa County Emergency Medical

Services, Moraga-Orinda Fire District and RESCUE ONE Foundation.

Learning CPR and having access to AEDs is critical. Lamorinda currently has nearly 90 AEDs in public places; their exact locations can be found on PulsePoint mobile app.

The big goal for Lamorinda is to teach residents to recognize the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and have them call 911 instead of driving to the hospital, says Lisa Vajgrt-Smith, with CCC EMS. Rein says even hands-only CPR increases the survivability rate yet it can be learned in only 45 minutes. He hopes to train 1,000 Lamorinda residents this year, and the program is off to a good start. Thirty Lamorindans took CPR training through a Parks and Recreation Department-sponsored class in Moraga last month. Lafayette and Orinda BART passengers got fliers May 1 (May is Stroke Awareness Month). Fifty-two MOFD Open House attendees learned hands-only CPR in Orinda earlier this month, and approximately 130 Moragans had CPR training during a recent meeting on the Saint Mary's College campus.

Countywide nearly 30,000 people have been CPR trained since January, 2012. Nationwide the average of CPR trained bystanders is

approximately 30 percent; already it is 42 percent throughout Contra Costa County and "closer to 80 percent" in HeartSafe communities. "We're working on improving those numbers," said Vajgrt-Smith.

Lafayette

Tree Controversy

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Also at the meeting was PG&E Director Angus Coyle, who reassured residents that there would be no rush to action. He said he wanted to continue the dialog and that clearly there was outreach work to be done with the public. However, he made the point that PG&E is ultimately responsible for safety and that it can't compromise on that.

Mayor Mike Anderson said that there was clearly a need for all residents to have easy access to talk to PG&E before the utility comes back to a future city council meeting.

Following the meeting, Lafayette resident Michael Dawson, who started the organization Save Lafayette Trees with a petition which now has close to 2,000 signatures, commented that he thought the meeting went well because it was the first time people were able to give input.

He said the variety of concerns were clearly expressed, ranging from lack of safety valves to lack of public disclosure, and evaluation of the California Environmental Quality Act, were too numerous to ignore. "It was particularly heartening to hear that the city council, and mayor in particular, are now questioning PG&E's rush to agreement," he said. "We hope this opens the door to questioning the validity of the agreement and ultimately recalling it."

If nothing else the strong emotions expressed by residents at the meeting prompted PG&E to more dialog and to initiate the series of conversation opportunities at the

reservoir and along the trail, where they were handing out informational brochures and were answering general questions.

When asked about possible alternative solutions, PG&E spokesperson Jeff Smith said, "We look forward to discussing the concerns the community has raised. We are responsible for ensuring the public is safe, and first responders have the access they need, and we can't compromise on public safety. The outcome of those discussions is still to be determined." He added that currently the exact timing has not been set. He said, "The earliest would be mid-June but that is not at all definitive."

Lafayette resident Gina Dawson, who stresses that while the representatives she has spoken to at PG&E have been very polite and helpful, says that she questions the delay of potentially only a couple of weeks in starting.

"It signals to me that PG&E did not take into consideration comments expressed at Monday's council meeting regarding the impact of removing trees in June due to prime nesting season, among other environmental concerns. It makes me wonder if (the) community outreach work Angus Coyle referred to is really about getting agreements from residents who have trees targeted to be removed in place by mid-June. My opinion on that? Just say no."

It is not going out on a limb to say that Lafayette will be hearing more about the trees.

For more information:

- www.heartsafe-community.org/
- www.pulsepoint.org/
- http://cchealth.org/ems/heartsafe.php
- www.mofd.org/about/rescueone
- www.heart.org/HEARTORG

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