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City of Wylie Public Information Office

EDITORIAL

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Community Emergency Response Team

A tornado roars through your neighborhood. At first you are relieved to find your home and family unscathed, but emerging from your house a different story unfolds--others in your neighborhood have not fared so well. Streets are impassable, blocked with debris; many homes are severely damaged; the odor of natural gas fills the air; and Ms. Jones next door is screaming that she is dying. Residents frantically call 911 but the lines are jammed or simply not working. Fire and police will not be able to respond for hours.

Groups of distressed and disoriented neighbors begin gathering in the streets. Your neighbors are looking for help and most are ready to accept direction. In an authoritative, yet calming voice, you explain the need to take care of their neighborhood first and provide assurance that fire and police are aware of the need and will eventually respond.

Gathering and assessing information from the neighbors you determine the most serious problem is leaking natural gas. Jumping into action, you organize teams to move throughout the neighborhood and turn off the gas, check for injured people, and observe and record the extent of the damage. Attending to Ms. Jones, you re-assure her that her minor scrapes and cuts are not life threatening.

Your calm, swift, decisive action is a direct result of training received as a member of the Wylie Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

CERT is a volunteer organization with chapters throughout the country focused on emergency preparedness and disaster response techniques. Local government prepares for everyday emergencies; however, a large scale disaster could occur that may overwhelm the community's immediate response capability.

CERT teams support and work directly with local Public Safety officials in the event of community emergencies and train neighbors to be prepared for hazards that threaten their families and

community. CERT training gives people the decision-making, organizational, and practical skills to offer immediate assistance to family members, neighbors, and associates while waiting for help.

Citizen volunteer Bill Blanton, Wylie Fire Marshal Steve Seddig and Wylie Fire-Rescue Captain Robert Ballard recognized the potential of a CERT program and began laying the groundwork for CERT of Wylie in 2006. The first class of fifteen students graduated the CERT program in June 2008. Today, under the direction of Emergency Manager Debbie Buccino, CERT of Wylie consists of 45 members spread throughout the community, comprised of people from all walks of life, including retail managers, architects, nurses, engineers, lawyers, and electricians. Chances are there is a trained CERT member in your neighborhood.

The eight-week CERT training focuses on basic disaster response skills including, fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations. Prior to graduation, students put their training to the test during a simulated disaster exercise integrating fire, police and other local agencies. Future training is planned in the areas of damage assessment and shelter management.

CERT teams may also be found putting their planning and organizational skills to work at local events or assisting fire-rescue and police in safety initiatives. Recently CERT volunteers teamed up with Wylie Fire-Rescue and high school students for a Smoke Detector Blitz. Volunteers visited more than 158 homes inspecting smoke detector and carbon monoxide detectors. More than 98 detectors were installed.

Go to www.citizencorps.gov/cert for more information on CERT.

Are you prepared in the event of a disaster?

Join your local CERT team today.

CERT of Wylie

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