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Fanwood CERT Teaches Citizen Emergency Preparation

By MEREDITH MANNINO

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

The Fanwood Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is teaching citizens how to be prepared for an emergency. With that goal in mind, disaster prevention/reaction and first aid were the first of two sessions of a free eight-week course. The Fanwood CERT is an organized team that is available to assist first responder services and is an outgrowth of the national CERT program, which was founded in California in 1985 to teach private citizens life saving skills in the event of a fire or other crisis. "The whole idea behind CERT training is for citizens to operate like a well-oiled machine by the time EMTs and police officers arrive to the scene of a disaster," Sergeant Tom Jedic of the Fanwood Police Department told attendees at the June 23 training that launched the eight-week program. "Team work and camaraderie are crucial components in CERT training," he said, noting that the CERT team is both a reactionary and preventative group. According to Sergeant Jedic, being at the ready for an emergency by safeguarding homes and planning for events like power outages and hurricanes is both imperative and invaluable in the event of an emergency. It's important to put together an emergency bag/first aid kit containing a flashlight, sunscreen, an extra supply of prescription medications, aluminum foil, pliers, duct tape, a whistle, copies of identification, emergency contact numbers and an extra set of car and house keys – one's own as well as those of relatives, he said.

Fanwood resident and EMT Melissa Padulsky presented "Basic Home First Aid," the second session held June 30. Ms. Padulsky emphasized that calling 911 from a landline phone is preferable to using a cell phone. Landlines are easily traceable whereas cell phones are not. Ms. Padulsky also explained that it is imperative to protect oneself from HIV and Hepatitis when performing first aid. Rubber gloves and eye protection are essential, she said, cautioning always to avoid direct contact with blood and other bodily fluids. "Though there have not been any documented cases of an EMT worker becoming infected through mouth to mouth resuscitation, it can happen and it is crucial to protect ourselves," she said. The treatment of bleeding, tissue injury, fractures, burns, chest pains, head and neck injuries, poisoning, heat exhaustion and hypothermia were among the other issues discussed at the First Aid course. Upcoming CERT courses include home fire safety and terrorism/major disaster awareness; dates and times TBD.

For more information, check out <http://www.fanwoodcert.org>. Everyone is welcome to complete the free CERT training. Whether or not you want to join the Fanwood CERT, the strategies taught in the training are a great asset in the event of a crisis or injury.

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