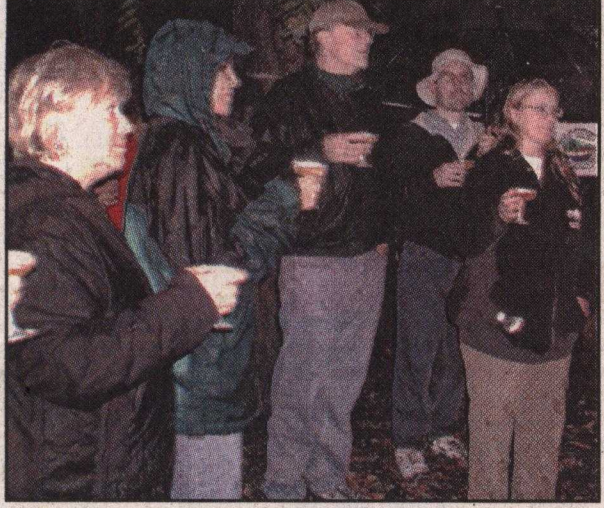


Community members participate in a toast celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake Sunday at Nisene Marks State Park.

Laura Norton
Register-Pajaronian



Loma Prieta quake remembered

Earthquake Ten years later *R-P 10-18-04*

Rainy walk raises resources for local rescue agency

By LAURA NORTON
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

APTOS — Rain pounded the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on Sunday, reminding nearly 50 community members gathered for a commemoration of the Loma Prieta earthquake of the wet weather that followed the quake exactly 15 years ago.

The group, which hiked to a memorial spot in the forest, was

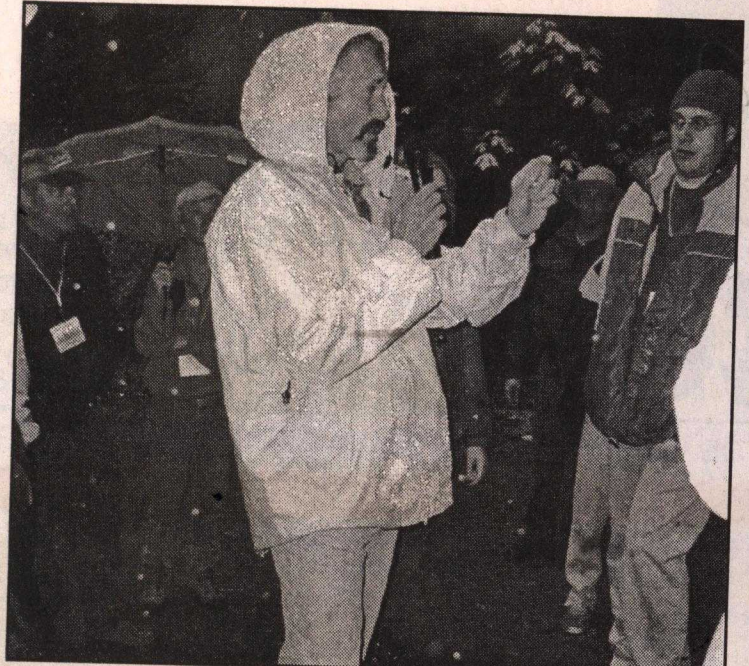
led by historian Sandy Lydon and organized by Cabrillo College Extension for an anniversary celebration of the magnitude-7.1 quake that left dozens dead and thousands of dollars worth of damage.

But while history was the catalyst for the expedition, Community Emergency Response Teams were the big winners; approximately \$4,000 was raised for the Redwood Drive CERT.

"We're using the anniversary to rekindle what we felt two weeks after the quake: that closeness," Redwood Drive CERT member Lydon said. "We're trying to reach back to use that emotion to keep people going."

CERTs began following the 1987 Whittier quake. They aim to train residents to provide first defense

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Laura Norton/Register-Pajaronian

UC Santa Cruz geologist Gary Griggs explains why there is no specific epicenter in an earthquake.

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safety, security and medical attention in the case of an emergency.

This type of training is especially important for people living in unincorporated or difficult to reach locations, Aptos/La Selva Fire Capt. Mike Conrad said.

"We try to prevent people from being the victims," Conrad said. "We teach fire safety, utility control, first aid, triage for mass casualties and light search and rescue. We want everyone to be involved."

Redwood Drive CERT members, or certistas as they call themselves, used Sunday's event to raise money for communications equipment.

The drive, located in an unincorporated area of Aptos bordering Nisene Marks, is a dead-end road with only one way in or out and can be inaccessible due to mudslides. There is no cell phone reception on Redwood Drive, residents said.

These conditions make rescue in emergency conditions difficult, Conrad said.

Though Redwood Drive certistas said they had not yet had to put their skills to test in a real emergency, they said they felt confident that they could perform emergency services if they had to.

Most of all, though, CERT training has brought the community closer together, certista Billy Burkle said.

"There's a sense of community and a sense that if something happens, yeah, we're going to be screwed up, but at least we won't be alone," Burkle said.

There are five CERTs in the Aptos/La Selva district, totaling approximately 80 members, said Conrad, who coordinates their training.

Still, he said, there is a need for more.

"There are limited places doing training. We want to spread this countywide, but we need to get more instructors out there," Conrad said, adding that he and Carol Wallace are the only two CERT trainers in the Aptos/La Selva area.

CERT training takes about 22 hours, spread out over two to six weeks. Redwood Drive certistas said the training is a good investment.

"It's easy to come and go on a daily basis without paying attention to what is around you," said Opal McAllister, a Redwood Drive certista who has lived in her home since 1976. "But up our road is all we have; we all know each other. With the training, our tight community has expanded."

On the heels of Loma Prieta, surrounded by a forest that shook itself to the floor 15 years ago, community members found that message particularly poignant despite the downpour.

"A lot of places charge you (for the training). Here it costs nothing," said Lydon. "They train you to take care of yourself. If you think back to those moments after the quake, what you thought about was, 'Where is he, she, they.' I am convinced that it is not in our best interest to forget this."

For more information on Community Emergency Response Teams, or to find out if there is a team in your area, call 685-6690.