

Corralitos pulls together in quake's aftermath

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THE OCT. 17 earthquake has drawn the close-knit Corralitos community even closer together.

While reopening the Browns Valley Road bridge to traffic will physically reunite Corralitos, residents have already united in spirit since the quake, helping to rebuild the town.

"The community feeling that we already have here has been reinforced," said Richard Faggioli, a Corralitos resident who serves on the boards of the Corralitos Valley Community Council and the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District.

Corralitos Community Free Methodist Church on Browns Valley Road, which housed a Head Start program before the quake and sustained nearly \$100,000 in damage, is slowly being rebuilt by volunteers who donate their Saturdays to the project.

The Rev. Ernie Miller, pastor of the church, estimated the Head Start program would be able to resume within a month. The church has received enough money in contributions to fund any work volunteers cannot do themselves, he said, adding that the donations of time and money have given him a "tremendous appreciation" for the community.

"One of the things that has been very pleasing to me," he said, "is that most of the people that have helped are still fixing their own homes."

Corralitos suffered widespread damage in the quake, with many homes in the area either destroyed or sustaining major damage, California Department of Forestry Capt. Ken Thomas said.

Firefighters visited each house in Corralitos following the quake, Thomas said. According to figures obtained Oct. 23, 52 of the town's 1,032 homes were destroyed, 150 sustained major damage, 446 had minor damage and only 384 were not damaged.

In addition, the quake caused several landslides that took days to clear and created fissures people might not realize are there, Thomas said. Heavy rains could cause problems and residents should be aware of potentially unstable areas.

"If they live in mountainous areas, they should walk their property and maybe look for fissures or cracks," he said.

Water in Corralitos Creek has been flowing at a higher rate

since the earthquake, which apparently opened up spaces in the earth that allowed underground water to flow to the surface.

John Nichols, senior civil engineer with the Watsonville Water Department, which serves Corralitos, said the water department was curious as to whether the quality of the water had changed as a result of a seeming increase in springs in the area. A mineral analysis showed "negligible changes," he said.

The combination of landslides and flowing water created a potentially dangerous situation in Corralitos immediately after the quake. Water was dammed up in a portion of Eureka Canyon and at one point was 25 feet deep in pools that stretched 250 yards, said Dave Hope, an associate resource planner for the county Planning Department.

While crews worked to drain the water, residents of several homes were warned they could be in danger if water spilled through before it could be rerouted, said Hope, who is responsible for stream restoration and clearing logjams throughout the county.

Resident Tomi Newman said she and her husband left their home, downstream from the landslide, for several hours after getting the warning. Luckily, crews were able to construct drains on either side of the slide and reduce the danger to their house, she said.

Meanwhile, Hope said the increased water flow has been a real boon for fish. The lack of water in the county's stream beds before the quake had prevented them from swimming upstream to spawn, he said.

"It's good," he said of the renewed water flow, "because the fish were just about to croak and, hopefully, this will allow them to make it until we get some winter."

While Corralitos is no longer in any immediate danger from the quake, residents are continuing to organize to guard against future disasters. They are hoping to use what they learned from the quake to form a resource network among neighbors, similar to the one established in the San Lorenzo Valley following the storms of '82.

Resident Florence Wyckoff said she and other residents had been planning to establish a neighborhood watch network before the quake, but decided instead to work on a disaster resource center.

"The earthquake really made us get going," she said.

Members of a newly formed Disaster Networking Team will meet in Corralitos for the first time tonight to plan the network, said Newman, a leader of the group.

One goal of the group is "to put together a packet that would inform people how to prepare for a disaster," Newman said, "what to put away in case of a disaster, so that you're ready."

Every household would also be asked to complete a form listing

members of the home and equipment and skills, such as medical or construction, that could be useful in a disaster, Newman said.

"It's a good idea to know your neighbors anyway," Newman said. "So I hope that, in that sense, we'll have a cohesive community."

Residents interested in helping to establish the network can call Newman at 722-8724.

People still have not recovered from the quake, Faggioli said,

and working to establish a resource center will divert their worries and concerns in a positive way.

The Disaster Networking Team grew out of the Corralitos Valley Community Council, instigated by Wyckoff and formed more than a year ago in response to controversy over a greenhouse project.

Between 60 and 80 people regularly attend meetings of the council, said Miller, who serves on the council's board of directors.

"I think it's the best thing

that's ever happened around here," he said. "It's almost like a New England town meeting."

Council members worked to help restore the town in the aftermath of the quake, Newman said, and that work led to the plan for the resource center and network. The quake made everyone realize, she said, "how badly we really do need that kind of community coalition."

Said Faggioli, "We already knew we are a community, but now we really are a community."

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN
January 31, 1990