

ACONA meeting brings out Altadena neighbors to work together

Elliot M. Gold, ACONA

Altadena Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (ACONA) held its third bi-monthly meeting Monday night, bringing together a new community of neighborhood associations who were quite vocal about making make Altadena “the greatest neighborhood in L.A. County,” the mantra of ACONA.

The meeting started with success stories told by Sandy DeJardin of the LaVina Neighborhood Association, and Nina Ehlig of the SENCH Neighborhood Association. Both have multiple blocks and block captains in their Associations, which are quite spread out. Sandy told how she and her block captains were able to get the attention of LA County a number of years ago to put a limit on speeders who were zooming through their neighborhoods. Elliot Gold chimed in telling how he got 90% of the neighbors on the LaCorona-Palm St Upside-down-T Neighborhood Association to sign a petition asking the county to take steps to slow down speeders who were putting the kids attending the school on Palm at risk. “Supervisor Antonovitch had no idea we were going to attend his forum a number of years ago. As one of us got up to the microphone to ask for speed bumps, dozens of neighbors raised signs that said “Bumps on Palm!” The Supervisor turned to his admin and said, “I think we better get speed bumps on Palm Street right away.”

Showing that there clearly has been a technical revolution in the Neighborhood Associations of Altadena, Devra Hall Levy of CoolidgeWatch showed a Website/Blog that she built herself this month which will allow her neighbors be better prepared for emergencies by identifying who’s CERT trained, who has emergency resources, who’s a nurse, etc. Just as important, her Website/Blog can help neighbors find a lost pet, or a plumber. Devra based her design partially on the brilliant work by Jeff Sedlik of BraeWatch (<http://braewatch.org/>), who has mapped out 14 Neighborhood Associations in Altadena using Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=115653985879211854798.000490e2bdada7af775ab&t=h&z=14>).

Devra was followed by Natalie Salazar of the Sheriff’s Department who provided details on the County’s emergency response training programs. For folks who don’t want to take the full Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) training, which is like emergency response training on steroids (it takes 20 hours over several days), Natalie offered what’s called NET—Neighborhood Emergency Training, which delivers the basics of emergency training in a couple of hours. Natalie even said that NET could be delivered to members of a Neighborhood Association in someone’s living room.

The central theme of ACONA is “communications”... how to share important timely information between neighbors, between neighborhoods, and, when necessary, throughout LA County. Possibly nothing addresses this as well as Nixle (<http://www.nixle.com/>), a service the LA County Sheriff’s Department uses to send emergency messages by emails or by text to subscribers’ smartphones. The service is free. Deputy Bob Boese demonstrated it to ACONA members. A key feature is that subscribers can enter not just their own address to be alerted to crimes or emergencies in their neighborhood, but can enter the addresses of their relatives (think your parents or grandparents), so subscribers can be alerted when there is an emergency in the neighborhoods of loved ones.

As always with ACONA, the last part of the meeting was an open discussion of other topics attendees wanted ACONA to address at future meetings. Dale Comfort got up and asked how it was that the speed limits in Altadena sometimes vary from block to block.

Haven’t noticed this?

Sometimes you’ll be on the same street, and BLAM, the speed limit drops from 35 to 30 or even 25! ACONA is going to invite the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to the next meeting for an explanation.

There are now over 70 Altadena residents who have attended ACONA meetings and who have signed on to work together to “make Altadena the best neighborhood in LA County.”

The next ACONA meeting will be in January. The date will be announced in the AltadenaBlog in December.

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