

REMINDER

News papers ♦ Yellow Pages

Vernon, Ellington — 03/24/2009

Thirty-one Community Emergency Response Team students graduate

BY WALLY ROBINSON ReminderNews



Thirty-one new members of the Community Emergency Response Team from Ellington, Vernon and Somers received their diplomas in a ceremony at Ellington's Hall Memorial Library on March 14. Much of the funding for the program was provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in the wake of Sept. 11 and Hurricane Katrina, when it became clear that first-responders , police, firefighters and medical personnel needed a cadre of trained civilians to back them up.

"CERT members are schooled in an array of emergency functions," said John Streiber, Ellington's Deputy Emergency Management Director, who served as Master of Ceremonies at the graduation. "Among them are search and rescue, CPR,

commodities management and distribution, traffic control, animal rescue and shelter and ham radio operations. In the event of a manmade or natural disaster, you people can make all the difference," Streiber told the graduates.

On hand to honor the class were state representatives Ted Graziani, Claire Janowski and Joan Lewis, Ellington First Selectman Michael Stupinski, Somers First Selectman David Pinney and Vernon Mayor Jason McCoy.

"There was a time when an organization like CERT was not needed in this country," Stupinski said. "Sadly, that is no longer the case. Hopefully, we can return to a time when your services are no longer needed."

Pinney said it's heartening to know that small-town citizens can always be depended upon to rise to the occasion. "We need to be prepared," he said, "and we salute you."

"You people are to be congratulated," said Graziani, "and you should be recognized by the media." Also on the dais was Dan Dube, chairman of the Capitol Region Citizen Corps Council. He left police work to get involved in emergency management. "I didn't even know what CERT was until my wife enrolled in a class in East Hartford," he said. "The more I thought about it and learned about it, the more important it became to me. Obviously, you folks feel the same way, and I'm proud of you."

A new CERT class will begin training in May. Anyone interested in participating should contact John Streiber at (860) 209-1692 .

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