

VERY SHORT BIO with Detail

Stella came to Disaster Preparedness through civic participation in Santa Barbara, CA, her home for over 40 years. Serving six years on the Architectural Board of Review, eight years on the Planning Commission, she believes the first job of government is the health and safety of its people. Transportation planning, xeriscaping, emergency evacuation routes, and emergency plans became part of a lexicon included in planning for an environment fraught with hazards.

For 20 years she worked in the field of Nuclear Medicine Technology as a registered tech, CNMT, RT(N) Emeritus, providing staff, teaching, and ultimately leading and designing Nuclear Med departments on the South Coast. Being more involved in design, she decided to formalize her design education and obtained a Professional Certificate from UCSB in Environmental and Interior Design, and for another 15 years had her own design business, Stella Larson Interior and Environmental Design.

While on a cruise, she came upon a man in an elevator lobby of a large ship. He lay on his side, face blue and swollen. Only a maintenance man was present. She knelt next to the man, shook his shoulder, checked for obstruction in his mouth, and instructed the maintenance person to call for emergency help and go to the nearest cabin to bring 2 pillows in case she needed to stabilize his neck and begin CPR. Though this just took seconds, she knew every moment counted. His pulse was present, though irregular and weak. He was not a candidate for CPR. The team arrived within a few moments and took it from there. Stella stepped into an open elevator and left the scene.

Returning to Santa Barbara, she began a search for CPR classes. She was rusty. The Red Cross had a certification program, but at considerable cost. Finally, she contacted the local Fire Department, and was directed to Yolanda McGlinchey, the City's Emergency Manager, who in turn directed her to CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training. With CPR and so many other compelling topics, CERT's value motivated Stella to write columns for the Mesa Paper in Santa Barbara to share information plus plug CERT to the community.

Now Santa Barbara has over 5,000 trained CERT volunteers. Neighborhoods are recognizing the importance of organization, and though the CERT teams are not organized as such, they quickly gather when summoned and do jobs which free First Responders to do theirs. As well as understanding chain of command, CERT volunteers are trained to do a variety of jobs from traffic management, first aid triage, simple search and rescue, fire suppression, and other topics including safety in the home, and disaster psychology. Stella has participated in Advanced CERT classes, and is a CERT Trainer, having completed the Train the Trainer courses.

For 6 years Stella has written a monthly column for The Mesa Paper, a newspaper in Santa Barbara, CA. The circulation is in excess of fifty thousand, and she continues to write on topics of Disaster Preparedness for the paper, and for various others.

Married to her husband Brooks since 1973, they enjoy their 4 children, 11 granddaughters, and two great granddaughters.

In 2013, Stella relocated to Bend, Oregon with her husband Brooks. She lives there now, participating with Firewise activities and Project Wildfire. She is a native of Montana, and is a true Westerner.

For more on CERT, visit the FEMA website. For more about Stella, just ask Teena. She knows almost everything!

Education: Western High School, Anaheim, CA, Cal State University Long Beach, Santa Barbara Community College, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara, University of California Santa Barbara, CERT, through Train the Trainer level.