



A ROLE PLAYER'S PERSPECTIVE:

The North Cobb High Active Shooter Exercise

by Steve Barden

The Scenario:

Sounds from explosions rocked the building, and soon we smelled the acidic smoke. The fire alarms blared out the constant beep, beep, beep in the hallway combined with a high-pitched, bird squawking alarm in the room. Less than two minutes later, shotgun blasts echoed down the halls and we could hear screaming and more blasts. Only Cathy and I were in the room, so we killed the lights and quickly huddled behind the only makeshift barriers that we could find: Cathy behind the teacher's desk and I behind two rows of chairs, stacked two high, which would hopefully serve as a primitive barrier or at least a temporary blind against an intruder.

We stayed in these hiding positions for several minutes, in total isolation with the constant blaring of the alarms and without any idea of what was going on throughout the building. I could feel my heart pounding as I strained to hear something outside our refuge, but all that I could hear

were the incessant alarms. Since the intruders appeared to have passed us, I slid up against the wall next to the hallway and slowly peaked around the corner. Immediately to my right, I saw the feet of a motionless young man lying face down in the hall. While I debated what to do, more voices and the sound of heavy footsteps were coming from farther up the hallway where I couldn't see. I quickly retreated back to my darkened, makeshift fortress. Cathy, her voice high pitched with fear, asked what was going on. What did I see? I didn't need to answer her, for she heard the voices coming.

The voices were commands, but I couldn't make out what was being said over the alarms. Now my neck was pounding along with my chest as the voices and the movement came to just outside of our room. My plan was to get close to the door and make a run for it as whoever it was came into the room, but suddenly the commands became very clear and rang out over the alarms.

"Hands up! Get your hands up where I can see them. Now!" the officer yelled from the doorway. Hidden behind my

crude, four-desk barricade, I slowly raised my hands as commanded.

"Slowly, raise straight up where I can see you. Keep your hands above your head. Now!"

I slowly rose until I saw where the voices were coming – from behind a gun barrel. A person was

holding the weapon, but all I could think about at that moment was that gun barrel and keeping my bowels intact. Running was not an option, at least not a smart one at this moment.

Within moments, Cathy and I were

face front against the lockers, being searched for weapons and then handcuffed. Our ordeal was almost over, and we were completing our participation in the North Cobb High School Active Shooter Exercise, the largest exercise of this type attempted so far in Cobb County.

The Exercise Goals

As a member of the Cobb CERT and an employee of a neighboring county school system, I jumped at the chance to participate in the July Active Shooter Exercise. The e-mail to CERT members requested volunteers to roleplay as students, teachers and visitors who were caught in a "Columbine-type" shooting situation. Cpl. Kevin Ashbaugh was responsible for gathering participants for this realistic scenario developed for local law enforcement agencies. Cathy, a couple of hundred others and I were to be there as role players to simulate a real scenario for the first

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Do You Know? Cari Edwards

by Debbie Casteel

We have an additional Cobb Emergency Management Agency professional working with our CERT Program, and co-workers already describe her as a real firecracker. Cari Edwards answers directly to EMA Deputy Director Lanita Lloyd and is instrumental in the operation of key elements of CERT. Cari manages grants, procurement and inventory along with projects specifically dedicated to Emergency Management.

Cari is the oldest of three sisters, grew up in northern California, was educated at UC Berkeley, and graduated from Humboldt State University in 1986 with a degree in Business and a post degree in Education. As early as six years old, she knew she wanted to teach, and followed that desire through Berkley and



Humboldt State. She taught school, was active in Girl Scouts (a life member) and taught outdoor education. In what little time that's not already occupied, she enjoys reading, quilting, crocheting and rug hooking. (All preferably done under some trees.)

While in California, Cari unknowingly prepared herself for Cobb County's CERT program by being trained for the Earthquake Team where she oversaw the First Aid and Search and Rescue groups.

She came to live in Georgia 10 years ago and is now a CERT VSAR member. She's known for approaching life at full speed and giving her all to every project, like her recent participation in CERT's award-winning Fourth of July Parade float project. She is active in, passionate about and dedicated to Cobb County's CERT program.

Cari and Don, her husband of 22 years, like to travel in their fifth-wheel trailer. One of their goals is to visit every national park in our country. She is also active in square dancing and serves as an officer and teacher for her local square dance club. The next time you are at a CERT function, you will no doubt see Cari unobtrusively working in the background. Be sure to tell her "Thank you!"

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FRESHEN UP WITH CERT Like That Class? Take it again and again!

By Carol Thompson

CERT members take basic training, and now we're all ready for any emergency at any time — *not!* After many months go by, you may not remember all the crucial details of your training when the need arises. You may not remember how to do the basic medical assessment or what to do if someone is bleeding profusely or exactly what the rules are for burns, for shock, for hysteria. You're beginning to get the picture.

Cobb County has been fortunate; we've had no damaging or life threatening disasters during the past year – but we can't predict the challenges of the future. If a critical incident should occur, you won't have time to stop and study, think it over, or practice; personal study and preparation must be accomplished *before* emergencies.

In 2007, CERT members were offered Skills

Sustainment classes in Medical Ops I, Medical Ops II, Disaster Psychology and Fire Safety – very important for you and for the people you're trying to help. Throughout the year the community education working group hosts "Skills Sustainment Classes" at various locations. CEMA



offers Storm Spotter training in the spring and annual training in December.

It's worth your time to take classes as often as you can. The more you take the classes, the more likely you are to remember what you have to do when an emergency happens.

Our volunteer instructors are selected based on credentials, training and experience. They

have all "been there, done that," and really want to help the rest of us improve our skills so we are ready when the time comes.

PLEASE TAKE CLASSES AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Currently more than 600 members are prepared to take care of themselves, their families and neighbors during a time of crisis. If you completed any of the following items this year, then you have met your 2007's annual training requirement: 1) The initial CERT training, 2) participated in quarterly Skills Sustainment Class, or 3) the Storm Spotter Training.

ALL members are encouraged to participate in annual training even if your training requirements have already been met!

2008 Initial 20-hour CERT Courses

Participant must either be a resident of, employed in, or be a member of a church in Cobb County and be at least 16 years old.

Austell Threadmill Complex

500 Austell Powder Springs Road, Austell
Jan. 8 - 29

Tuesdays and Thursdays; 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Catholic Church of St. Ann

4905 Roswell Road, NE, Marietta
Feb. 7 - 28

Thursdays; 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Congregation Etz Chaim

1190 Indian Hills Parkway, Marietta

Feb. 7- 28

Tuesdays and Thursdays; 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Acworth Police Department

4400 Acworth Industrial Drive, Acworth
(meets three Saturdays; 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.)

Starts March 1, Ends March 15

Skills Sustainment Classes

First Quarter of 2008

Med Ops I and II

Dates to be announced.

For additional information, contact Anita Leming at Aleming@cobbcounty.org or at 770-499-4567. For more information or to register, contact Carol Thompson at certthompson@comcast.net

NINE CERT DISTRICTS have been established and are divided by commission districts and the cities. All areas will have district leaders; if you are interested in helping, applications are being accepted for leader positions. For additional information contact Rozlynn Hamilton at 770-499-4568 or at rozlynn.hamilton@cobbcounty.org.

Guiding CERT: The Fourth of July Float



Event Committee Chair Jeanine Whitmire took on the task to develop a float for the Marietta Fourth



of July parade with the theme "One Nation—United." The Event Committee proposed a float that would reflect how the CERT Program was developed to support our nation. Using the float creation by the committee, Carol Pilgrim formatted the design. Bobby and Carol Pilgrim also offered their home as the building site.

of July parade with the theme "One Nation—United." The Event Committee proposed a float that would reflect how the CERT Program was developed to support our nation. Using the float creation by the committee, Carol Pilgrim formatted the design. Bobby and Carol Pilgrim also offered their home as the building site.

Approximately 60 members helped to assemble and disassemble the float. The float displayed 10-foot-tall detailed reproductions of the New York City twin towers. A red, white, and blue rainbow stretched from the top of the twin towers to a pot of gold. The rainbow told the story of the adoption of CERT, containing the logos of FEMA, Georgia's Office of Homeland Security, Cobb County and Cobb EMA. Between



the logos were everyday community people representing our members. The pot of gold overflowed with CERT vests.

The float also displayed CERT members actively working at a disaster site: a search and rescue mission, fire suppression, and triage scene. More than 40 members followed the float along with the CEMA vehicle. Due to all the hard work, we won the "Mayor's Award for Most Creative" entry.

**A Very Special Thanks to Michael Thurman who loaned us his trailer and also drove during the parade, to Bobby and Carol Pilgrim for the building site, to Jeanine and the Event Committee and to all those who were involved. What a creative way to educate Cobb residents about CERT!



Car Crash Response: A CERT Member's Training Kicks In

I have often wondered if I would ever *really* use the skills I obtained in my initial CERT classes and the CERT Skill Sustainment classes. (*You do know we have these, don't you?*) I got my answer recently.

I work at Life's Hope Baptist Church on Hicks Road, across from the Stone Harbor subdivision. Even in an office facing away from Hicks Road, the sound of metal meeting metal at 45 miles an hour is unmistakable. I grabbed my cordless phone and was dialing 911 on my way out of the building. I remembered my CERT class training and calmly and coherently gave the 911 operator a factual who, what, where and when description of the crash. (*If you have been to a CERT Annual Training Class then you*

received BUZZ CARDS with this emergency response information.) I was able to perform triage and assess the need for an ambulance.

I stayed with the victim until the professionals arrived. When the pros arrived, I gave them my name and where I could be located if they had any questions and then stepped back and let them do their jobs. The feeling of being able to respond quickly and competently to this everyday incident was unbelievably rewarding.

Our CERT classes and skills prepare us for the monumental tragedies we hope never occur, and for the potential of everyday emergencies, as well. It was a privilege to be of service.

Stay Involved. Stay Educated with Cobb CERT!

**Do you have a story to tell?
Send it to cobbcertnews@yahoo.com**

The North Cobb High Active Shooter Exercise

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responders.

The Briefing

As we gathered in the North Cobb High School cafeteria, we were briefed on what was about to take place. The Columbine massacre had taught responders that time was as much of an enemy as the shooters.

The longer that responders waited for the proper teams to assemble, the more time the shooters had to carry out their mayhem. Whichever law enforcement teams arrived first, those responders would create teams and immediately go after the shooters or "bad guys." The later arriving responders would create rescue teams who would remove people hiding and any wounded.

After the briefing, a few volunteers were selected as injured victims, and the rest of us received role-playing instructions. We were to play these roles as realistically as possible to enhance the training for the officers. Cathy's role was to be terrified, sporadically talkative and hiding. Mine was to be equally as terrified, hiding and making a break for the door when the officers arrived. I tried to follow my role and run, but looking down the barrel of a gun and hearing a very commanding tone changed that idea immediately.

The Safety Checks

It was amazing how real the scenario became once the officers arrived. The entire exercise was closely scrutinized for safety by a team of officers serving as safety monitors observing every aspect of the event. Actual firearms were being used, but all live ammunition was banned from this exercise. Every



weapon had to be checked and rendered secure with nylon ties, making them impossible to fire, before they could be brought into the school. Despite knowing this, and even after seeing the tagged gun pointed at me during the scenario, for a split-second it was real. I believe that it was just as real in that same instance for the officer looking at me, because at that time, the officer didn't know who I was. I could have been one of the shooters pretending to be a victim. So, in this exercise, he had to react as if Cathy and I were potential threats.

I believe that our participation as victims assisted the police in preparing for something that everyone hopes will never occur. On a more personal level, I obtained a first-hand account of the inevitable sheer confusion when an event like this happens and the tremendous pressures that our first responders must face during these situations. My high respect for our first responders has escalated even higher.

As CERT members, if you hear of future opportunities to assist as role players in a public safety exercise, do it. Not only will you help your community, but yourself as well.

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Cobb County...Expect the Best!