

# TEEN CERT TO THE RESCUE

Living in California, natural disasters are all too familiar. We constantly have to watch for earthquakes and fires. Last year's devastating wildfires gave us a glimpse of what can happen when we aren't prepared. When disaster strikes, it is vital that we are prepared to respond. We all have a role to play in keeping our communities safe—no matter where you live, no matter who you are, no matter how you participate. What role will teens play in emergency preparedness in their communities?

The Teen CERT, Community Emergency Response Team, is a group of students who have been trained to respond when an emergency occurs. Teen CERT, a branch of FEMA's National CERT program, aims to educate youth about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area. Teen CERT members are trained in basic emergency response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, incident command, and disaster medical operations. Using skills learned in

classroom training and drills and exercises, Teen CERT members can assist others after an event and before first responders can arrive on the scene. Across the country, local CERT programs provide training and support for teams in all sectors of the community—our chapter is the first teenager targeted chapter in Santa Clara County.

The Teen CERT program was created to address preparedness and response capabilities for high schoolers rather than adults and parents. As teenagers become more self-sufficient and transition into a more independent life, it becomes that much more important that they know how to work through emergency situations and handle themselves. While many schools have taken measures to educate their students and staff about health and safety, Teen CERT provides a more thorough and official process by diving deeper into both physical and psychological

emergency preparedness through an interactive course.

This online course consists of nine units and the time spent on the online course can be counted towards community service hours. Each unit is an audio-assisted slideshow with visuals

and videos to make the course more engaging and accessible. After teens have completed the course, they are invited to join "Skills Days" which

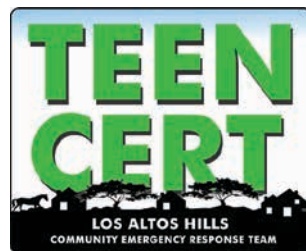
are in-person training days to get hands-on practice on what they've learned. With support from the Los Altos Hills County Fire District and the Town of Los Altos Hills, Santa Clara County Teen CERT plans to hold two of these days in June.

The Santa Clara County chapter has been expanding its team and recruiting more members by word of mouth, social media accounts, and through administration and staff at local high schools. So far they have recruited about 100 Los Altos High School members and

hope to expand to other schools like Mountain View High School and steadily increase their numbers by the summer!

Over the past month, two Teen CERT boards have been created in Santa Clara county. The Santa Clara County Inaugural Board is the main board that will oversee all of the Teen CERT chapters that emerge from the program, as they are working to create more boards in the county. The other board is the Los Altos/Los Altos Hills Board/Founding Chapter and is currently working closely with the inaugural board to accomplish our first goals and establish a blueprint for city boards. The program's goal is to get as many teenagers to complete the CERT program. Looking to the future, this chapter expects a lot of success in participation and hopes to increase awareness about emergency preparedness.

We are beyond excited for what we have planned and by continuing to work closely with our members and boards, we are on a great path to creating a safer community in Los Altos.



# MEET THE TEAM

## SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OFFICERS

### Mihir Mishra (Chair, LAHS Junior)

"In my free time, I enjoy playing sports, spending time with friends, biking, and baking."

### Shawn Toney (Vice-Chair, LAHS Junior)

"I like to spend my free time playing sports, watching movies, being with my friends, and playing the piano!"

### Shanna Kurusu (Secretary, LAHS Junior)

"In my free time, I like to do a lot of crafts like baking and making jewelry."

### Jacob Parmacek (Treasurer, LAHS Junior)

"I enjoy sports, video games, and hanging out with friends in my free time."

### Tara Davari (Public Relations, LAHS Sophomore)

"I like making food and eating it, watching tv, playing basketball, hanging out with my friends, and traveling."

### Mihika Jain (Public Information Officer, LAHS Sophomore)

"In my free time I like to hang out with friends, play lacrosse, and bake!"

### Shannon McCabe (Communications, LAHS Sophomore)

"I spend my free time playing competitive volleyball, playing piano, and having fun with friends and family."

## LOS ALTOS/LOS ALTOS HILL BOARD OFFICERS

### Oliver Breitbart (Chair, LAHS Junior)

"In my free time I like to play sports, hang out with my friends, sell shoes, watch movies, and learn new things."

### Sania Rashid (Vice Chair, LAHS Sophomore)

In my free time, I enjoy going on drives with my friends, playing tennis and watching movies!

### Aditya Bhattacharyya (Secretary, LAHS Sophomore)

"In my free time, I like to hang out with friends, do taekwondo, and run track."

### Hannah Choi (Treasurer, LAHS Junior)

"In my free time, I like to hike, as well as cook and draw."

### Dhruv Bhagavatula (Public Relations, LAHS Junior)

"In my free, time I like to watch movies and play sports."

### Bridget Liu (Communications Team, LAHS Freshman)

"In my free time, I enjoy painting and drawing."

### Lucy Kravevich (Communications Team, LAHS Freshman)

"In my free time, I like to hang out with friends and spend time in my garden."

### Zach Fagin (Communications Team, LAHS Sophomore)

"I play three sports: basketball, football, and track, but I also like to go on bike rides in my free time."

