

PUBLIC SAFETY CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes an individual or group that has made an outstanding contribution to the safety of Cupertino. To nominate a Public Safety Champion, please answer the following questions:

1. What contributions of time, leadership, and impact has this individual made to enhance public safety efforts in Cupertino?

For the past few years, Judy Halchin has been functioning as a co-leader of the CARES volunteer group. She runs monthly meetings in Jim Oberhofer's absence and makes some of the presentations. Her title is Assistant Emergency Coordinator.

The name of Judy's group, CARES, means Cupertino Amateur Radio Emergency Service.

The CARES "who we are" is described in detail at these web pages:

<https://www.cupertinoares.org/index.php?content=about>

<https://www.cupertino.org/residents/community-services-programs/emergency-preparedness/safety-training-and-volunteer-programs/cupertino-amateur-radio-emergency-service>

As background, this website describe what Amateur Radio Emergency Service is:

<http://www.arrl.org/ares>

Judy has led CARES drills, training exercises and public event support for about five years. The public event support includes the 5K races and July 4 fireworks. Judy's leadership and organization at public events added a layer of safety with CARES members positioned around the venues to spot for safety issues. CARES has been dubbed by city leaders and by the Sheriff's Office as their 'eyes and ears' in the field.

Judy is the training lead for CARES. She takes new members under her wing and guides them through the training needed to be qualified as a field responder. Training is crucial to get all volunteer members using the same processes and radio communication protocol.

I estimate Judy averages five to ten hours per week volunteering for CARES.

2. How has this individual set the example for others to follow in community interaction? How does this individual stand apart?

Judy is one of those rare volunteers who steps up to lead. She has pursued numerous public safety training courses offered by the County and State to enhance her knowledge and capabilities in this field.

Judy is calm and polite, and has a strong work ethic. She has invested well over \$500 in ham radio equipment to support her public safety role for the City.

Judy leads by example – with event leadership positions, work ethic and radio gear investments.

Judy's avid volunteerism has led her to volunteer at public events around our County. The benefits to Cupertino from these assignments are 1) to enhance her event management experience and 2) to build relationships among the cadre of ARES volunteers in neighboring cities and the County. Since earthquakes do not adhere to city boundaries, it is useful for Cupertino ARES leaders to have working relationships with counterparts in the County in case Cupertino needs to request mutual aid.

Below are two examples of Judy's dedication to civic volunteerism:

1. She worked for two weeks at a Red Cross shelter in Chico for refugees of the Paradise fire.
2. She was handling radio communications in the command post at the Gilroy Garlic Festival when the shooting occurred last year. The FBI set up a crime scene perimeter that encompassed the volunteer parking lot. About five days passed before she was able to retrieve her vehicle.

When a serious public safety event hits Cupertino, Judy will be a highly *experienced* leader directing CARES volunteers.

3. Describe the effort involved, and challenges or obstacles the individual had to overcome, to achieve their success.

Unlike most CARES members, ham radio was not a hobby for Judy. Radios and electronics were not part of her professional occupation. To become involved in CARES, she had to pass a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) written test. Test elements include radio theory and federal law pertaining to amateur use of airwaves. She studied for and passed the test, and was issued a radio license by the FCC.

Next, she had to invest in radio equipment and start the training programs offered by CARES and the County. Judy was a quick study. She invested many hours to attain a command of public safety and ham radio communication. She has become a well-respected ARES member by the head of the County ARES, Michael Fox. She has earned a reputation as one of the best radio operators in the County.

Judy's photo is on page 5 of April 2018 Scene, inside the Communications Van #469.



Cupertino 'CARES' about Emergency Communications

A group of community volunteers has been quietly working to ensure that there's no radio silence when the next disaster hits Cupertino. The group known as CARES, Cupertino Amateur Radio Emergency Service, is dialed in and has its antennas up.

In the event of a community-wide disaster, the telecommunications system could become overloaded, if not inoperable. Fortunately, when all else fails, Cupertino's amateur radio operators still will be able to provide information and aid the City's response.

The Cupertino Scene sat down with longtime volunteer Jim Oberhofer to learn more about the group. Jim joined CARES in 1993 because of his interest in emergency preparedness and communications, as well as a desire to give back to the community.

SCENE: What should residents know about CARES?

JIM: We are here to support the City and community. CARES members may be your neighbors who volunteered to form an organized pool of amateur radio operators to provide reliable primary and backup communication when

needed. While our FCC License says "amateur," we train for a professional communications response.

SCENE: How many active members are there?

JIM: We have 67 signed up, with about 30 I'd consider active. These 30 are the ones I can definitely count on to show up when activated.

SCENE: What do you find most fulfilling about volunteering for CARES?

JIM: I take this role seriously. What is most fulfilling is understanding the risks that the City faces, planning how CARES could respond, growing the skills of our members, and being able to confidently respond to the needs of the City

SCENE: How important will an organized radio operation be when we have emergencies in Cupertino?

JIM: I think very important. The big event we are waiting for is an earthquake. For instance, 2018 is the 150th anniversary of the large 1868 Hayward Fault earthquake event. The U.S. Geological Survey says we are due for another one. It will occur; we are just waiting for it.

Wildland fires are another big threat particularly given the Tubbs and Thomas fires of last year.

A communications outage is also something to think about. This could be by a cyber-attack that takes out commercial communications or power. We are working with the County on how we would pass along 9-1-1 messages if there was a total loss of telephone service throughout the community. This happened back in 2009 in Gilroy and Morgan Hill.

SCENE: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

JIM: We are fortunate that Cupertino and Santa Clara County have been spared the severe damage and destruction that have hit other communities throughout the state and country. However, we know we will face some adverse event at some point. I think CARES, CERT, and MRC members volunteer their time because they truly see a need and are concerned about the well-being of their neighbors and the community.

For more information about CARES, or to volunteer, visit cupertinocares.org or cupertino.org.