

**VISTA ADULT SCHOOL
TRAINING FOR DISASTER**

In the fall of 2004 in the California avocado-growing city of Vista, Misty Oleson's Vista Adult School ESL/EL Civics class participated in a disaster preparedness project. Oleson, also an ESL resource teacher, worked with Jack Walsh, R.N., from the San Diego County Department of Health and Human Services, to develop a curriculum for her intermediate/ advanced ESL class. Together Oleson and Walsh used information from www.ready.gov and other available resources that focus on reporting emergencies and preparing for disasters.

Misty Oleson's class explored and then agreed on what constitutes emergencies and disasters and appropriate actions to take when reporting specific crisis situations. Students learned about earthquakes, fires, illnesses, and terrorist attacks. They worked on how to prepare their own households for an extended disaster, including storing emergency supplies, preparing for special needs and circumstances, and accommodating seniors and those with disabilities. Twelve of Oleson's advanced students became Disaster Preparedness Trainers and made presentations to 22 other Vista ESL classes, ultimately training more than 1,100 Vista Adult School students during the year. The culminating event was a Health and Safety Fair at the Vista Community Clinic in May 2004 attended by more than 150 people, half of whom were ESL students from the school. As a result of the curriculum project, four ESL/EL Civics students went on to make presentations in the community, with one student providing disaster preparedness training at his apartment complex and another offering training at his church. In addition, team leader Alberto Arreguin was invited to serve on the Community Advisory Committee for Vista Community Clinic.

All students, including those who completed the curriculum in Misty Oleson's class, and those who received training from Oleson's Disaster Preparedness Trainers, boosted their self-confidence in handling emergencies and disasters and increased their civic awareness. In addition to learning how to handle emergencies, Oleson's trainers also gained confidence in organizing tasks and activities as well as using English language and literacy skills to present information to groups of people, both in their school and in the community. The project was so successful that Vista Adult School ESL students requested that this year's class who complete the disaster preparedness curriculum present the information again this year.