Establishing A Neighborhood Watch Program In Your Community

Savannah – Chatham Metropolitan Police Department

Establishing a Neighborhood Watch Program

Intent of the Neighborhood Watch Program

- Build a partnership with the community to reduce crime and improve livability
- Instill a greater sense of security while reducing the fear of crime
- Create a "sense of community" and put the "neighbor" back into the neighborhood

Organizing a Neighborhood Watch Program

- Establish the need for a NW program
- Select a Chairperson and Block Captains to organize the NW program (Optional: Develop a Steering Committee to organize the NW program)
- Select a location to hold the NW start-up meeting
- Select a date and time for the NW start-up meeting
- Contact the SCMPD and invite an officer to present the NW program to the group
- Prepare an agenda for the NW start-up meeting
- Invite your neighbors to the NW start-up meeting

Responsibilities

Chairperson – The Chairperson is responsible for overseeing the operation of the NW program in their community.

- Work with the community to increase their awareness of the NW program
- Handle incoming calls/emails from the Block Captains
- Review the progress on the NW program
- Pass on information received from the SCMPD
- Insure that the community is holding regular NW/HOA meetings
- Arrange for the SCMPD to provide topic specific training (i.e.: Home Security, Operation ID, Reporting Suspicious Activity)
- Maintain a comprehensive list of Block Captains (i.e.: Name, Address, Telephone and Email Address) and NW participants

Block Captains – The Block Captains are responsible for getting their neighbors involved in the NW program.

- Distribute information received from the Chairperson via telephone, email or newsletter
- Create a block map with the current information of their neighbors (i.e.: Name, Address, Telephone and Email Address)

- Keep track of any medical problems or unique circumstances their neighbors have

- Coordinate all activities for their block and neighbors they are responsible for
- Greet any new neighbors that move into their community and educate them on the NW program
- Serve as a liaison between the chairperson and the neighbors they are responsible for

Steering Committee – The Steering Committee is the guiding force for your NW program. The committee is made up of the Chairperson, Block Captains, SCMPD Crime Prevention Officer assigned to your area, Members of the HOA, Members of different community organizations, and etc.

Identify some preliminary goals for the community

1. Goals are:

- Specific so you have a clear idea of what actions need to be taken
- Measurable so you know when the goal is achieved
- Challenging, but Realistic
- Have significance to you and the community
- Wishes or Hopes that are written down on paper
- Motivating and Challenging without being rigid

2. Set a date for the achievement of the goals listed

Long-Range goals – accomplished in a three to five year period

Short-Range goals – accomplished in a six month to one year period

Immediate goals – must be accomplished consistently to move forward to the short-range goals.

3. Determine the concerns of the community in regards to the crimes occurring in their area

- Ascertain from the SCMPD the reported crimes occurring in their area
- Design programs to address the concerns of the community
- Advance and maintain the programs so that the community will participate
- Evaluate the success of the NW program as it relates to crime reduction and the fear of crime
- Address other issues of concern that the community may have (i.e.: Disaster Preparedness, Health and Safety issues)

Biggest Killers of a Neighborhood Watch Program

- Lack of clear and varied goals
- Lack of strong community involvement
- Lack of ongoing leadership

Purpose of a Neighborhood Watch Program in Your Community

- Reducing the risk of begin a crime victim
- Being better prepared to respond to suspicious activity
- Greater access to criminal activity information
- Getting to know your neighbors
- Reducing the fear of crime and making your neighborhood more livable
- Allowing other issues of concern to be addressed
- Receive a NW sign to post in your neighborhood

What Makes a Neighborhood Watch Program Successful?

- Must get everyone in the community involved.
  - (Young / Old, Married / Single, Homeowner / Renter)
- Communicate with the NW participants
  - People have a need to know what is going on in the group
  - People need to feel like their ideas and input are valued
  - People need to feel that the NW program is working

Maintaining an Active Neighborhood Watch Program

- Hold regular meetings Share information (good or bad) with your neighbors

Communication is the Key

- Meeting announcements should be to the point and timely so that people can get it on their calendar
- Encourage Block Captains and other neighbors within the community to take a leading role at meetings
- Keep meetings brief and on target
- Develop a newsletter to keep your neighbors informed – Distribute on a regular basis
- Develop a website to keep your neighbors informed
- Develop an email tree to keep your neighbors informed
- Develop an electronic bulletin board where your neighbors can have an ongoing dialog with each other
- Recognize your neighbors for the good things they do within your community

- Make sure the community knows that you are getting things done
- Encourage social events where you can communicate more informally
- Be conscious of the tone of voice and language used when communicating with people

Neighborhood Watch Participants

- Do not take any risks to prevent a crime or try to make an arrest * it's more important to be a good witness*
- Pay attention to detail (ie: clothing, tag number, direction of travel and etc.) when observing suspicious people, vehicles or activites and report their observations to other Neighbors, Block Captains, Chairperson and the SCMPD when necessary.
- Keep an eye on their neighbor's house and report all suspicious activity
- Get to know their neighbor's names and are able to recognize them and their vehicles without any hesitation
- Notify a trusted neighbor when they are going to be away so they can watch the house and pick-up the mail and/or newspaper
- Attend as many NW/HOA meetings as possible
- Implement all security measures suggested by the SCMPD
- Properly identify all property using the Operation ID guidelines

Neighborhood Watch is Not

- A vigilante force working outside the normal procedures of Law Enforcement
- A program designed for participants to take personal risks to prevent crime
- A 100% guarantee that crime will not occur in your Neighborhood

Resources

http://www.scmpd.org
https://www.citizencorps.gov
http://www.natw.org
http://www.nccrimecontrol.org
http://www.ncpc.org
http://mcgruff.org
http://www.ready.gov