GET INVOLVED—HELP STOP VIOLENCE TO ENSURE SAFER LIVES

• COMMUNICATE WITH LOCAL NEIGHBORS

• REGULARLY CONTACT THE POLICE TO KEEP THEM UP-TO-DATE WITH IMPORTANT INFO (CRIME, ROBBERIES, SUSPICIOUS PERSONS, ETC.)

• GET INVOLVED WITH AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION THAT YOU FEEL WILL HELP BENEFIT THE DAILY LIVES OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS—INCLUDING YOURSELF.

• GATHER THE FACTS ABOUT CRIME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BY: CHECKING POLICE REPORTS, PARTICIPATING IN VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS, & LEARNING RESIDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CRIME

• SPREAD THE WORD TO GET OTHER MEMBERS INVOLVED AS WELL—THE MORE THE BETTER!

• SPONSOR CLEANUPS, ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO BEAUTIFY THE AREA, & ASK THEM TO TURN ON OUTDOOR LIGHTS AT NIGHT.

• ENCOURAGE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCHES TO SPONSOR MEETINGS TO ADDRESS MAJOR ISSUES (I.E.-DRUG ABUSE, GANGS, SELF-PROTECTION TACTICS, ISOLATION OF THE ELDERLY, CRIME IN THE SCHOOLS, & RAPE PREVENTION)

• MAKE AN EFFORT TO INVOLVE EVERYONE—THE MORE PEOPLE WHO ARE INVOLVED THE BETTER BECAUSE TEAMWORK IS USUALLY MORE PROFOUN D THAN INDIVIDUAL INSIGHT.

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CITY OF BOWIE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Starting an Apartment Watch

Neighborhood Watch, Block Watch, Town Watch, Apartment Watch, Crime Watch—no matter what it’s called, this is one of the most effective & least costly answers to crime. Watch groups are: a foundation of community crime prevention; they can be a stepping stone to community revitalization.
Phase One: Getting Started—Meetings, Block Captains, & Maps

- Form a small planning committee of neighbors to:
  1. Discuss needs
  2. The level of interest
  3. Possible challenges
  4. The Watch concept
- Contact the local police/sheriffs’ department, or local crime prevention organization in order to discuss Apartment Watch & local crime problems.
- Invite a police/law enforcement officer to attend your meeting.
- Publicize your meeting at least 1 week in advance by:
  1. Advertising with door-to-door fliers
  2. Form a Partnership with the property management
  3. Choosing a meeting place that guarantees easy access to people with disabilities
- Hold an initial meeting to evaluate neighbors’ interest
  * Establish purpose of program
  * Identify issues that need to be addressed
  * Emphasize the fact that a Watch group is:
    ♦ an association of neighbors who look out for one another’s families and their properties.
  ♦ Alert the police of any suspicious activities in progress.
  ♦ Collaborate to make one’s community a safe and secure place to live in.

Phase Two: After the Community decides to adopt the Watch idea, Elect a chairperson.

- Ask for block captain volunteers who are responsible for:
  1. Relaying info to members on their block
  2. Keeping up-to-date info on residents
  3. Proposing specific efforts to involve the elderly, working parents, & young people
- Block captains serve as: liaisons between the neighborhood and correspond information about meetings & crime incidents to all residents.
- Establish a regular means of interacting with Watch members—e.g., newsletter, email, fax, etc.
- Prepare a neighborhood map containing names, addresses, & phone numbers of participating households & distribute to members.
- With guidance from a law enforcement agency, the Watch trains its members in: home security techniques, observation skills, & crime reporting.
- Before you post Apartment Watch signs, check with law enforcement to see if they obtain eligibility requirements (e.g.-# of houses that participate in the program.) Law enforcement may also be able to provide your program with signs. If not, they can probably tell you where you can order them.
- Organizers & block captains must emphasize that Watch groups are NOT vigilantes and DO NOT obtain the role of the police.

Helpful Tips for Success

- Hold regular meetings to help residents get to know one another & decide upon program strategies/activities.
- Consider getting involved with an existing organization such as a citizens association, community, development office, etc.
- Canvas door-to-door to recruit members
- Involve everyone in the neighborhood
- Gain support from the police/sheriffs’ office
- Both of these types of agencies are considered to be major sources of information on:
  1. Local crime patterns
  2. Home security
  3. Other crime prevention education
  4. Crime reporting