



West Orange Police Department Community Services Unit

Every community needs eyes and ears.

Neighborhood watches are started in an effort to reduce crime rates, provide security, and bring together a community. This cause can unify and fill a neighborhood with pride. Watches are also a great way to build relationships with law enforcement.

More than a Watch Group

Relieve Anxiety Often times people are reluctant to start watches due to the fear of retaliation. Many law enforcement agencies do provide outlets to provide information anonymously, but if you are a witness to crime it is vitally important for prosecutors to hear your testimony. Encourage members that participation won't place them at risk, and relieve any anxieties they may have.

Start the Block Promote block captains who will inform the neighborhood of what is happening on their specific street corners. These captains will also communicate with law enforcement to let them know what's happening in the neighborhood as a whole. They are the connecting point between the neighborhoods and watch leaders.

Communication is Key Establish the method that you'll use to communicate regularly. Whether that be e-mail, social media, phone, newsletter, or a combination of many channels.

Know the Neighborhood Have names, phone numbers, and a map of participants and their households. This can help you get to know each other, and have an idea of who hasn't been involved yet that you may want to invite.

Watchers are NOT Vigilantes It important to stress that watch groups ARE NOT vigilantes and will never assume the role of the police. Suspicious activities that are seen need to be reported to WOPD.

Involve Everyone No matter what size or age, everyone in the neighborhood is of value. Recruit them and bring them together. More people means more coverage. Younger kids can be used to patrol on bicycle, roller skates, or skateboard; tools that are quick and not accessible to older adults.

Meetings Bring guest speakers and relevant entertainment or information to meetings to keep the cause fresh and people excited. Make sure these meetings are accessible to everyone, and they accommodate people with disabilities.

Don't Let Rumors Circulate Reduce any worry in the neighborhood by getting truthful information out quickly. Only let the facts circulate so rumors don't startle residents.

Upkeep the Neighborhood Untrimmed greenery, trash, excessive materials outside, and other uncleanliness can encourage burglars. Keep the neighborhood clean and tidy.

Don't be Aggressors Patrol programs are useful ways to monitor the neighborhood, but never assume the role of aggressor. The role of a watch is to deter and monitor crime, not to be the hand of justice.

Be a Community These groups can extend their reach away from just crime. Things like gang violence, drug abuse, elderly issues, crime in schools, and sexual assault prevention bring neighbors together through events, activities, awards, et cetera.

A neighborhood watch is the "eyes and ears" of a community. They are the closest link to local law enforcement and advantages for having the group are invaluable.

How Can I Start One?

Start by gauging interest to see if a group is something your neighborhood wants to establish. Put together a small team that can plan, talk about needs, gauge broader interest, evaluate possible challenges, and work as the advisory board for the watch.

Find a meeting location. This could be a home, church, or local community center. Plan agendas to make sure the meetings run smoothly, and mix business with some socializing so members feel engaged.

Reach out to the West Orange Police Department Community Services Unit to talk to them about your watch and crime in your area.

Lastly and most importantly—promote and market your meetings. Let the neighborhood know via social media, fliers, phone calls, or a combination of these that you are starting a program. Media and local business can also help build a presence.

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