



El Centro, California

POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Neighborhood Watch

### Other Activities & Projects:

The real goal is to keep your group active. Besides a crime patrol, a neighborhood watch group can branch out and work on other quality of life issues including truancy, code enforcement, sanitation, neighborhood beautification, and street lighting. Additionally subscribing to the theory of an "ounce of prevention," a watch group can collaborate with business interests, including a chamber of commerce to increase job opportunities and training, thereby reducing employment barriers for youth and others. The group should be imaginative and sponsor a variety of activities. Below is just a partial list of events and activities to consider: Plan and execute community clean-up days. Organize a trash and junk cleanup effort. Many nurseries, building supply companies and equipment rental businesses will give community organizations discounts or donations. Donated paint can be used to spruce up your neighborhood and cover graffiti. Neighbors can share fix-up expertise and tools to help one another. The group can help repair the property of a senior citizen or a disabled person. Consider painting a neighbor's porch or garage. Additionally, planting trees, shrubs and flowers can go a long way toward beautifying a neighborhood. Rent a dumpster for a weekend and promote "spring cleaning."

- ✓ **Create a neighborhood garden.** A neighbor with unused space may allow other neighbors to use it in exchange for produce. The city might also provide space for a garden plot. Celebrate the accomplishment with seasonal festivals. The neighborhood watch may encourage the creation of gardens by residents with the initiation of "beautification awards."
- ✓ **Reclaim your parks.** Adopt your neighborhood park and/or playground and work with local officials to maintain the cleanliness of the recreational areas. Your watch group can organize regular teams to clean graffiti and help repair any vandalism. Well-kept parklands and equipment as well as organized activities will attract residents to the parks in large enough numbers to discourage illegal activities. Regular block parties, barbeques, and athletic competitions, for example, disrupt drug-dealing and gang-related activities that take over some parks and deny them to the law-abiding public for their enjoyment. Plan recreational activities for adults and youth. Walking, jogging and bicycling programs as well as card and game board groups can be organized by the neighborhood watch. Further, once a month, instead of families watching television, neighbors can host discussion/book groups.
- ✓ **Celebrate youth by participating on the children's parade.** Consider holding the parade to coincide with the coming of spring or summer. When planning the event, make sure your neighborhood watch coordinates the activities with local officials and the police. Area businesses are usually willing to donate refreshments and prizes for these events. The neighborhood watch may want to sponsor a bake sale at the event. Whatever activities, remember to contact the media.
- ✓ **Conduct a goods exchange.** Collect unwanted toys, books or outgrown children's clothing and exchange these items with neighbors for other "valuables."
- ✓ **Host a dinner extravaganza.** The party moves from house to house or apartment to apartment as each resident provides one course. This event enables neighbors to socialize with one another and visit each other's homes.
- ✓ **Organize a pot luck supper** and/or pancake breakfast in honor of new members. Establish a telephone pal program. Seniors or home bound persons are telephoned daily

to ensure that they are okay. This program can be adapted to keep track of latch key children.

- ✓ **Develop a mentoring program** in which adults in your neighborhood spend time with and act as role models for individual youth. Mentoring may address several juvenile crime risk factors including alienation, academic failure, poor commitment to school, and association with delinquent peers. This project introduces protective factors including pro-social involvement and development of socialization skills, bonds with adults and standards for behavior.
- ✓ **Help organize after-school recreation programs** in sports, music, scouting, arts and crafts, and other non-athletic areas.
- ✓ **Work with business leaders**, to sponsor professional development seminars, job training, internships and apprentice programs for community youth and others. These projects can reduce truancy, gangs and juvenile violence.
- ✓ **Partner with education leaders** and other community-based organizations to develop a conflict resolution/mediation program for teenagers and adults. Creative problem solving skills are taught which may be used to resolve youth loitering.