

# Businesses join crime watch program

By Casey Hans  
Staff writer

Keeping an eye on business — that's the motto Farmington businesses are stressing this holiday season.

Nearly one year after a Business Watch networking program was introduced to the Farmington community, the idea has finally taken hold. More than 58 businesses began participating Dec. 4.

The program's logo is a white, blue and black eye that warns shoplifters and others, "If I don't call the police, my neighbor will." It appears in participating business windows.

Wendy Strip Sittsamer, director of Farmington's Downtown Development Authority and one of the program's organizers, called the newly formed network a "free benefit."

"What can you lose by being informed?" she asked.

Commander Chuck Lee of the Farmington Department of Public Safety said the importance of the program is in good communications between merchants, not necessarily in the numbers of criminals caught, or Business Watch "alerts" issued.

"An absence of crime is a measure of everybody's success," explained Lee.

THE PROGRAM is co-sponsored by the Farmington Department of Public Safety and the Downtown Farmington Business Association, with administrative help of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and the city's DDA. Lee said the plan is to eventually spread the Business Watch to businesses throughout the city; there are already a few downtown businesses involved.

"There's no doubt, this is the most effective time of the year" to have a Business Watch program, said Lee. "I stressed, let's get this thing going before the holiday."

Organizers had hoped to start the program sooner, but a glitch in ordering business window decals pushed the date back, according to Strip Sittsamer.

The DFBA, a downtown retail merchants group, also took the needed time to review decals, to be sure the image was right.

There's "too much money being put into the downtown image" for businesses and the city not to pay attention to logo type, Strip Sittsamer said.

"It was important enough for us to have decals appropriate to downtown Farmington. People feel it (the eye) is a positive symbol. It seems to go with the idea of a Business Watch program. It means we're watching."

are contacted either by the DFBA during business hours, or the public safety department at other times.

The Farmington program is different than others, because the business community has gotten so involved with organizing the program, Lee said.

"We like the whole concept of business talking to business. Now what we have to do is go into other centers and try to get them organized as a group."

MEMBERS OF the Business

Watch group, and others, can also take advantage of special training sessions offered by the public safety department. They range from stopping shoplifting to building security, and are conducted by one or more Farmington officers.

Several businesses have already participated in crime prevention training.

Lee promotes any avenues of communication, from the Business Watch network to these training sessions. He cites figures from the well-entrenched Neighborhood Watch

program, which is now active in more than half the neighborhoods in Farmington.

The city logged 104 break-ins in 1983, compared with only 14 so far this year, he said.

"Much of this success can be credited to the fact that we have our residents talking more with each other and residents telephoning the police department more about suspicious persons," he said. "We hope to carry on with increased communications between our businesspeople and the police department."

## Rep named to youth crime committee

State Rep Wilbur "Sandy" Brotherton, R-Farmington, was named to the Oversight Committee on Early Intervention and Prevention Services of Juvenile Delinquency by House Speaker Gary Owen.

The special committee will consider ways to nip future crime in the bud by providing counseling and other assistance to "high risk" youngsters before they become career criminals.

"With all the problems facing our children in today's complex world,

their difficulties often begin at an early age, and I believe that to date, we've failed to provide adequate early intervention and preventative crime measures for juveniles.

"There must be a greater emphasis on stopping youngsters from beginning a career in crime, and the time to steer them away from the

wrong place is when they are still in elementary school," Brotherton said.

The lawmaker was pleased with his appointment.

"I look forward to serving on a panel that has the potential to study and recommend meaningful solutions to help reduce juvenile crime in Michigan," Brotherton said.



RANDY BOBBS/staff photographer  
Sara Beckman, co-owner of the Rocking Horse in downtown Farmington, installs a Business Watch decal.

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