

Residents help police keep burglary rates low

By Casey Hans
staff writer

It goes beyond being neighborly. The watchful eye of Farmington residents is helping keep residential burglary rates down.

Residents in some 70 percent of Farmington neighborhoods are participating in the city's six-year-old Neighborhood Watch program, acting as eyes and ears for police on their respective streets. Burglary rates have continued to drop, with 14 incidents reported in 1989 compared with 24 the previous year.

For 1990, the Farmington Department of Public Safety is expanding horizons for the group in an effort to maintain interest in the program and get others involved.

A yearlong program starting in February will teach them CPR, help them look for the warning signs of children on drugs, offer tips on how to "burglar proof" their houses and give them an overview on the law and how it affects them.

Informational meetings will also be held for those living on a certified Neighborhood Watch block, but who are not currently involved.

"I GUESS the new approach... is to offer something we think is of interest," said Commander Chuck Lee, who has coordinated the watch program from its inception. "If it works, we'll do it into the '90s."

Neighborhood Watch was started in Farmington in October 1983, after a resident of the Bel Aire subdivision inquired about it. It has grown and now involves nearly every neighborhood in the city. Watch "blocks" actually represent streets, or portions of streets, where residents are organized and contact police when they see anyone suspicious.

Of 118 potential blocks in Farmington, 90 are organized and certified in the program. Signs posted at the ends of streets identify a neighborhood certified for Neighborhood Watch.

A block captain's meeting in November 1989 brought out ideas for the yearlong program idea, which took shape in recent weeks.

"It appears the program has moved to the next stage of development," said the city's public safety director, Frank Laubach. "In general, it's the next phase of the program. It's a natural phase we're happy to see."

THE 1990 program schedule for those living on streets certified in the Neighborhood Watch program follows. All are on Tuesdays:

• Feb. 20 — A CPR certification class will be offered, including instruction on the Heimlich Maneuver. This meeting will be limited to the first 25 people who call for reservations, but could be offered again if there is enough interest.

• March 20 — Open certification meeting for those living on a certified street, but currently not involved.

• April 17 — special presentation on "How to Tell If Your Kid Is On Drugs."

• May 15 — Open Certification meeting.

• Aug. 21 — special presentation on "How to Burglar Proof Your Home." This will include tips on personal safety.

• Sept. 18 — Open Certification meeting.

• Nov. 20 — special presentation on "You and the Law."

• Dec. 18 — Open Certification meeting.

Special Neighborhood Watch organizational meetings will be scheduled for non-certified blocks, at the request of residents of the area. There must be 50 percent or better participation from the block before it can be certified.

THE IMPETUS for adding the new program is because the city saw interest in the program waning, as has happened in other communities. The department decided on the special sessions after discussing it with current block captains, Lee said.

Sometimes, people do too good a job, causing a slackening off of interest.

"In the absence of burglaries, there is no interest" in such programs, Lee explained.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Neighborhood Watch block captains and officers from the city of Farmington meet to talk about the residential watch program and upcoming refresher and information sessions scheduled for 1990. Pictured (from left) are: Commander Chuck Lee, who coordinates

Neighborhood Watch; Hal Reigner of the Twin Valley subdivision; Debbie Cornwell of the Alta Loma subdivision; Rudolph Wartin of the Chatham Hills subdivision; Duane Cowger, a public safety officer who responds to watch calls and Tina Morgan of the Warner Farms subdivision.

WL board votes to fill vacant seat

By Darrell Ciem
staff writer

A Commerce Township man, lured for his involvement in Walled Lake Schools, has been appointed to fill a vacant school board seat.

David Flammer, who failed in a previous bid for a board appointment, was chosen Thursday in a 6-0 school board vote to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of school trustee Kathy Mizzi.

Flammer, an Ameritech employee, was appointed to the post from which Mizzi resigned Jan. 13 to accept a job at a New York home for runaway children.

Flammer beat out three other candidates, including former long-time board member Patricia Jackman of West Bloomfield. Jackman failed to win re-election last June.

The school board appointed Flammer on Thursday, five days after it interviewed candidates during a specially called session. Flammer will assume the post at the board's Feb. 8 meeting.

Flammer lost an earlier bid when

G. William Knight was chosen to fill a board vacancy, but school officials have noted that he has had extensive involvement in the Walled Lake Consolidated School District.

He served on the committee that recommended the hiring of Superintendent James Geister in 1988, and he also has been involved in school functions at Gleggery Elementary, where the eldest of his two children attends school.

"He's just a very positive individual," said Lois Ryan, Gleggery principal. "We are very proud that Gleggery will be represented on the school board."

Flammer was out of town last week and could not be reached for comment.

As an appointee, he will have to

run in the June school board election if he wants to defend the seat, which will be placed on the ballot. Voters will choose a school trustee to fulfill the remaining two years of Mizzi's unexpired term.

Other school board seats at stake in June are those occupied by Knight and school trustee Joel Silberblatt.

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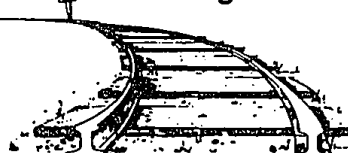
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