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Provides tips and written activities for kids (aged 5 to 9) on home and street safety.



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**ILLINOIS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INFORMATION AUTHORITY**

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You can fight crime in your neighborhood!

McGruff® the Crime Dog here. Are you worried about crime in your neighborhood? Many people are. And many feel that they can't do anything about it. But believe me, you CAN do something. People just like you have done remarkable things to help make their neighborhoods safer, and they did it without putting a strain on their time or their wallets. And you can, too. Remember, crime prevention is everyone's business. So join me, and let's "Take A Bite Out Of Crime!"

Let's face it: crime is a big problem, and it affects us all. Do you know someone whose home or business was burglarized? Have you noticed graffiti on buses or the sides of buildings? Maybe you haven't been the victim, but if you've seen these types of things, you know that crime is close by. The good news is that you and your neighbors can do something about it. You can help reduce crime and make your neighborhood safer!

How do I get started?

Did you know that, as a concerned resident, you are one of the police's best assets? One of the best ways to fight crime is to work with your local police. Is there community policing in your area? Under community policing, police officers work with the same neighborhoods to get to know

You are one of the police's best assets. So get involved!

the residents and the most immediate crime problems. Police, residents and agencies work together to identify problems and try to solve them before they get out of hand.

Get involved! Attend a beat meeting and meet the officers who patrol your beat, find out what they're doing, and what you can do to control crime on your block. Call your local police and ask about it.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH. Whether or not you have community policing in your neighborhood, a neighborhood watch is one of the most effective and least expensive answers to crime. Basically, a neighborhood watch (or block watch) means neighbors looking out for each other.

Talk to your neighbors and find out if there are groups that are already working to fight crime and drugs. Ask your local police, community associations and civic groups. Recruit the local PTA, church group or service club to help out.

If no such group exists in your neighborhood, why not start your own, even if it's just on your block? Participating in a watch is a smart move — research shows that there is less crime in areas where neighbors look out for each other!

Let's move on it!

Talk to your local police or sheriff's department and neighbors about setting up a watch. It's a good idea to get a map and clearly define the boundaries for your watch area. (Start small. You can expand as you become more organized.) Then set up a date, time and place to meet.

Let's get together

You and your neighbors don't have to meet where the problem is occurring. If you fear that local criminals will interfere, try to meet somewhere outside the area.

- ✓ Draw up an agenda.
- ✓ Invite the police and other local organizations. They may have tips and educational materials your group can use.
- ✓ Keep discussion focused on action, not complaining.
- ✓ Start with a basic short-term goal and build from that.

Home safe home

- ✓ Make sure there are good locks on exterior doors and windows. Use them. Consider a home security system.
- ✓ Lock up when you go out, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- ✓ Trim shrubbery that hides doorways or windows.
- ✓ Mark your valuables with an engraving pen and keep a list of them in a safe place. (Many police departments loan out marking devices for free.)
- ✓ Use timers on lights and radios to make your home appear lived-in when you are away. Have a neighbor pick up your mail and newspapers.
- ✓ Get to know your neighbors and their daily routines.
- ✓ Keep a list of emergency numbers near the telephone.

You don't have to tackle the biggest problem first. Start where the group is comfortable. If people are afraid to be on the street in the evening, a resident patrol is probably not a good first move for your group. Working toward better street lighting and painting over graffiti (with the proper OK) may be better starting points. And success helps overcome fear, so your next action can be more direct.

Get everyone's help

As your group gets under way, enlist as many people as possible from your community to help you. Anyone and everyone can take the most basic actions, such as handing out educational flyers, picking up litter, and reporting suspicious behavior or crimes to the police (see box). Older kids can teach younger kids about violence prevention. Adults can help manage programs, raise funds and round up local agencies to help. Whatever the contribution of time, energy, talent and resources — small or large — it will help.

Keep the watch going and growing

Once you've successfully removed a problem from the neighborhood, celebrate the good news with a block party or dinner. But don't give up on the neighborhood watch! If you're ready to tackle a bigger problem, get moving. And always look to other activities to enhance community safety and well-being:

- ✓ Publish a newsletter that gives local crime news, recognizes people who have helped the police and highlights community activities.
- ✓ Create and distribute a list that includes important numbers to call for emergencies.
- ✓ Let your neighbors know the neighborhood watch is alive and well by posting signs throughout the community.
- ✓ Get together with neighbors as often as you can. Don't lose touch!

IN CHICAGO, RESIDENTS OF ONE NEIGHBORHOOD were concerned that a corner liquor store was really a hangout for drug dealers, who would conduct their drug sales on the sidewalk and then run inside the store when they spotted the police. Police and residents worked together to determine a continuing pattern of criminal activity around the store. As a result of police and residents' work, the city revoked the store's liquor license, and the store was forced out of business. Your neighborhood watch can help make a difference, too!

Watch group members are not vigilantes and do not assume the role of police. They only ask citizens to be alert, observant, and caring and to serve as extra eyes and ears for law enforcement and neighbors.

Watch out for...

- * Any unusual or suspicious noise that you can't explain, such as breaking glass, gunshots, abnormally barking dogs, pounding or screaming.
- * Someone going door-to-door, looking into windows and parked cars, or who seems to have no purpose wandering in the neighborhood.
- * Vehicles moving slowly, without lights at night, or with no apparent destination.
- * Business transactions conducted from a vehicle. This could involve the sale of drugs or stolen goods.
- * Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices. The goods are probably stolen.
- * Property being removed from closed businesses or unoccupied residences, or property carried by someone on foot at an unusual hour or place, especially if the person is running.

...and report crimes to police!

- * For emergencies, call 911 or your local emergency number. For nonemergencies, call your local police.
- * Describe the event as briefly as possible. What happened? When, where and how?
- * Describe the suspect — including sex, race, age, height, weight, hair, clothing, speaking accent, tattoos and other characteristics.
- * Describe the vehicle, if one was involved. What is the license plate number, color, make, model and year? Any special markings or dents? Which way did it go?