

HISTORY OF TOWN WATCH

The notion that citizens should help prevent crime watching the streets as well as the homes and businesses of their neighbors on a voluntary basis extends all the way back in time to Colonial Philadelphia. In fact, the passage of the "Safe Streets" bill on July 1, 1700 marked the beginning of Town Watch in Philadelphia. Under the bill, the Council of Philadelphia appointed a watchman who patrolled the streets at night, ringing his bell to advise citizens and constables of disorders and dangers. An expanded version of the original Watch was instituted in 1705, and continued for forty-six years, until a paid police force was established.

For more than 200 years, Town Watch has proven to be an effective crime prevention tool. Its effectiveness can be maximized if Town Watchers learn through training the parameters of the role, proper Town Watch procedures, and the crime prevention context in which Town Watchers operate.

Across the nation, crime is of concern to citizens in cities, suburbs, towns, and rural areas. Increasingly, citizens and law enforcement professionals realize that neither one can eradicate crime working separately. Neighbors and other concerned citizens, working cooperatively with law enforcement, can have a positive effect. Through the well recognized concept of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH (AKA TOWNWATCH), a community-based program supported by the National Sheriffs' Association since 1972, residents of thousands of communities across the nation have discovered that they can make a difference in preventing crime.

The prevention of crime – particularly crime involving residential neighborhoods – is a responsibility that must be shared equally by the law enforcement officers and private citizens. The fact is, the impact on crime prevention by law enforcement alone is minimal when compared with the power of private citizens working with law enforcement and with each other. TOWNWATCH INTEGRATED SERVICES is based on this concept of cooperation, and nationwide statistics* prove that it works. When citizens take positive steps to secure their own property and neighbors learn how to report suspicious activity around their homes, burglary and related offenses decrease dramatically.

Statistics show that when a concerned citizenry does its part, the possibilities are endless...and the results positive. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is now the most successful anticrime initiative in the country and the most effective and least expensive tool for restoring the safe, pleasant environment we all want for our families!

Ninety-five percent of the TOWNWATCH groups in the United States are currently receiving assistance from law enforcement agencies. Everyone benefits when law enforcement maintains a high level of interest in NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH.

Philadelphia Operation Town Watch came into existence July 1, 1996, under the leadership of Anthony Murphy. He and two staff persons began the process of training and certifying the 300 plus existing town watch groups in the City of Philadelphia. Today, there are over 720 certified Town Watch groups serving over 20,000 trained members. The recruiting and training of Town Watch groups is combined with empowerment efforts and support to create what is now called Town Watch Integrated Services (TWIS).

Citizens and law enforcement officers must work together to prevent crime. We know that everyone shares this vision and we hope that you will join your local Town Watch group and help the cause.