

Roosevelt forms Neighborhood Watch

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 09 September 2016 02:05



Slew of vehicle break-ins, burglaries beset neighborhood

An east-side neighborhood in Gallup is taking steps toward becoming more proactive in solving and preventing crimes. A meeting held three weeks ago at Roosevelt Elementary School discussed a number of vehicle break-ins and burglaries around Gallup's Roosevelt neighborhood.

Kelly Akeson of the Gallup Police Department introduced residents to the idea of a Neighborhood Watch Program. City Councilor Linda Garcia, whose council district includes Roosevelt, organized the Aug. 25 meeting. Afterward, she said things are off to a great start.

"This is a step in the right direction," Garcia said. "There have been some problems in the neighborhood and this meeting is about the residents of the neighborhood coming together to do what they can to help stop the crime that has been happening."

Akeson said by implementing a Neighborhood Watch group, crime will be deterred, and the power will be in the hands of the community, rather than the criminals. He said he could relate to the residents' concerns, because years ago, when he first moved to Gallup, he lived near Roosevelt Elementary.

"In doing this you encourage people to meet each other for neighborhood watch purposes,"

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Akeson told the three-dozen or so residents gathered for the 45-minute-long meeting. "You're putting the word 'neighbor' back into the neighborhood."

Anna Biava, a married resident who has lived in the Roosevelt area for about four years, said she's heard and been victim of vandals and thieves. Most of the crime, she believes, is connected to substance abuse by people who don't live in Roosevelt.

"It seems to have gotten worse each year," Biava said. "I think a lot of people feel the way that I do."

Biava said she knows at least three cars have been stolen in parts of Roosevelt this year. Her own vehicle was stolen and later recovered in April. She encouraged residents to immediately report suspicious cars and people to the police.

"There are problematic people who come into this neighborhood," Biava said. "I think working with the police to solve things is a very good step. There are a lot of families who live in the neighborhood."

GPD Capt. Marinda Spencer said there's no specific data about neighborhood criminal incidents, but she can recall calls coming in to police dispatch this year regarding thefts and break-ins around Roosevelt.

Akeson gave residents of the neighborhood tips, like designating block captains.

"We're not asking you to take personal risks, and we're not asking you to put yourself in harm's way," Akeson cautioned, pointing out that residents should report condemned and vacant homes that look like eyesores and are havens for criminal behavior.

GPD Capt. Edwin Yazzie attended the meeting, too. He spoke individually with a few folks who wanted their concerns kept private.

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Garcia said she plans to meet GPD Chief Phillip Hart about the outcome of the meeting.

Biava and Garcia said another neighborhood group meeting is scheduled for the second week of October.

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