**What Is a Neighborhood Watch?**

Information from the Austin Police Department

Crime or the fear of crime provides the impetus for the citizen to become better informed on how to protect themselves and their property.

Neighborhood Watch operates on two principles: neighbors getting to know and watching out for each other and watching out for others’ property as though it was their own. Neighborhood Watch helps to create an identity within the neighborhood which in turn fosters a sense of pride and belonging for the participants.

Getting back to the old adage of being our “brother’s keepers” is neighbors watching out for other neighbors. Crime Watch is not designed to substitute for police protection. Rather it is an extension or supplement in assisting the police in making neighborhoods safer for all citizens. Neighbors are asked to be the eyes and ears in helping the police apprehend criminals.

The participants make their neighborhood a safer place to live by adopting a more observant and active attitude and, as a result, become more aware of strange cars, persons, and circumstances. This will not take a lot of time and soon will develop into a daily habit of becoming more aware of what is going on in the neighborhood.

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Setting up your own Neighborhood Watch Program is easy and help is available from experienced neighbors and the police officers in your area. The first step is to talk with your neighbors about the need/value of the effort, decide if you want to implement the program by being a block captain, determine how large an area you want to oversee (it does not have to be an entire block or long street), contact your APD district’s officer to discuss the area and request forms, plan the first meeting by inviting the officer to speak and put written invitations on the doors of those in your selected “block,” conduct the meeting which can be informal in nature, collect contact information on neighbors, then pat yourself on the back for taking the first step to helping create a safer environment.

The Austin Police Department conducts periodic safety training sessions giving more details and techniques for neighbors (in the evening at convenient locations). Subsequent ‘block meetings’ can include topics suggested by your local officer, other timely items suggested by neighbors, and current events.

A valuable activity for neighborhood watch participants is to join together in holding your annual National Night Out event in October of each year. This event builds neighborhood spirit and safety awareness by sending the message that you are all working together to prevent crime and make your neighborhood a safe place to live. Other neighbors who have held NNO events and the Austin Police Department are sources of assistance in planning and conducting NNO events.

For more information on Neighborhood Watch and NNO, contact: [mnaboard@milwoodna.com](mailto:susan@amtrails.org)

**Milwood Neighborhood Association website: www.MilwoodNA.com**