

Wells Branch Neighborhood Watch -

For the Tracy Trail, Donald Drive & Robert I. Walker groups, Neighborhood Watch has created a greater sense of community as well as a feeling of responsibility for each other and an eagerness to help our neighbors.

Everyone is so busy with work and school that it can be difficult to make time to connect with your neighbors. We all tend to live in our own little worlds. By expanding our contacts and helping others to feel a part of something larger, we increase the desire to get along with each other, resolve issues amicably, develop new friendships, increase support networks and in turn this creates a much stronger, safer community.

As a group, we decided that we wanted more than just the traditional "Crime Watch". We wanted a neighborhood that felt like the ones we grew up in: A community where everyone knew each other and worked together, where the kids were safe and could ask any adult for help. With this in mind, these are the Block Captain responsibilities I've chosen to take on. **Only the first four are required.** Consider the rest as suggestions to solidify the neighborhood that you can add as you go along depending on the interests of your group. They're great topics to discuss at your meetings and ask for input on. And, as your group grows and becomes more comfortable with each other, neighbors will start volunteering to take on projects.

- Schedule educational/informational meetings with the Travis County Sheriff's Organization for Neighborhood Watch Group
- Provide a contact list for all the neighbors with emergency contact information, work numbers, cell numbers, home numbers and e-mail addresses for all homes participating in neighborhood watch
- Gather information pertaining to safety issues and disburse to group via e-mail as needed
- Encourage awareness and community involvement
- Keep neighbors informed as to events that the MUD or WBNA sponsor:
i.e. Travis County Sheriff's Extravaganza, National Night Out,
Thanksgiving Potluck, Holiday Luminary Festival & Hayride, WBNA Easter Egg Hunt
- Be a resource: I keep extra Neighborhood Watch booklets on hand as well as a copy of our covenants so that any time someone has a question I can answer and/or explain the necessity of covenant enforcement and how we all benefit from it.
- Organize safe houses: Identify homes where an adult/parent is home most of the time and let the children in the neighborhood know where they can go in an emergency if their folks aren't at home. Some groups agree on a "safe" sign and place that in the windows of approved homes. We're such a small group that we just did it by "word of mouth".
- Organize & plan group events:
 - Community Clean-Up Day twice a year (spring & fall)
 - Notify MUD that there will be extra trash and green gold that week.
 - Pick up additional green-gold containers to be used and returned the following week.
 - Organize neighbors
 - Supplies
 - Tools
 - Teams
 - Identify large projects in advance so that we start with a game plan

- Reach out to those in need of assistance. Ask for help from them and they're more likely to accept help in return.
- I set up a table with donuts & coffee and an ice chest with water in my front yard. Another neighbor cooks burgers and hotdogs when we're done. Everyone chips in to buy food, sodas & beer
- July 4th Potluck & Block Party
 - Everybody gets together after most of the festivities at the park are over. We cook out on the driveways, visit, have homemade ice cream and then go to the fireworks as a group
- Organize community garage sales.
 - This facilitates bonding and you draw larger crowds with "multi-family" sales.
- Halloween Party:
 - I always host this because I love Halloween and want the kids to have as much fun as I did as a child! Three years ago the kids had their party the weekend before Halloween. Two years ago we had it on Halloween!!! The Youth Neighborhood Watch group hosts a party in my backyard (we dye the fountain blood red) and the adults bring lawn chairs and goodies and we have our get-together out front and in the house.
- Christmas Party/Meeting
 - As this is such a busy time of year, it's best to send out an e-mail early asking when everyone is available and if they want a meeting or just a social function.
- Organize a Youth Neighborhood Watch Group for children twelve and up. There are a number of activities they can plan or help with. Volunteer work is the best way for kids to learn social responsibility.
 - Our kids hosted a "Stranger Danger" meeting where the Travis County Sheriff's Department came out and taught a modified safety course. This program is put on at the elementary schools, but we made it more personal and involved the parents. All ages were invited.
 - They deliver the WBNA newsletter each month and volunteer any time anyone will let them.
 - We had a neighbor who was ill last year and they cut his grass at no charge until he got back on his feet.
 - They have their own team and work really hard on the clean-up days as well.
 - They are constantly trying to come up with ways to make Wells Branch a better place to live.
 - As they've grown, the kids have hosted Teen Safety classes and Teen Dating Violence Awareness seminars with the Sheriff's Department
 - They say it takes a village... This is a great opportunity to affect change. My children are grown, and now my neighbors' kids are almost there. One of the most impressive things (I think) is that they all have a strong sense of community responsibility. They're teenagers now and they still want to volunteer!

Other issues we've dealt with as a group:

Rodent problems: In our case, the Travis County Health Department came out on a Monday morning, surveyed the problem spots in the neighborhood, discussed rodent infestation patterns and offered a line of action. Most importantly, they provided educational material for me to give the group at the next meeting. Rodent control is much easier when the whole neighborhood participates.

Trees: Twice in the last three years we've had a tree doctor come to the neighborhood to address various concerns. Each time we walked the entire block and I made treatment notes for the neighbors with problems. It costs the same whether he's doing one house or the entire group and this way everyone gets the service and no one else has to take off from work.