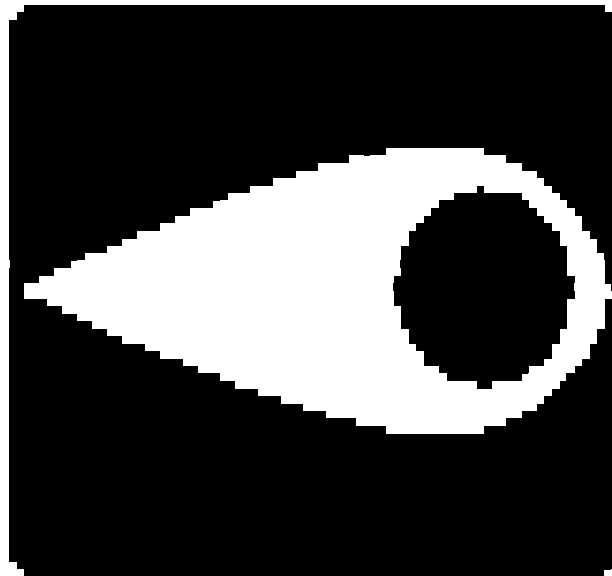


Community Watch Handbook



Know Your Neighbors... Build Community... Create a Safer Neighborhood

*Brought to you by the Office of Off-Campus Student Services:
Off-Campus Student Advisory Council, subcommittee Students Against Violent Environments (SAVE).*



Introduction

The Community Watch Program is a community guided crime prevention program with the main objective being to reduce crime, and the opportunity for crime.

Community Watch Programs are not designed to be a substitute for police protection; rather they supplement police activities by providing extra eyes and ears. This cooperation between citizens and the police has resulted in a decrease of crime in Community Watch areas nationwide.

When many people with different views, resources and skills come together to solve community problems, goals can be realized and reached. Community Watch Programs are driven by the energy and dedication of their members and the hope of improving their quality of life.

The benefits of organizing and participating in a Community Watch Program translate into a higher quality of life. This handbook will provide you with valuable information on the benefits of participating in a Community Watch and the steps to getting started and being successful.

Please Note:

You are not being asked to take personal risks, only to serve as extra “eyes and ears” and to report information on crimes and suspicious activities promptly to the City of Syracuse Police by dialing 911.

Contents

Getting Started	3
Planning Your First Meeting	4
Inviting Your Neighbors	5
The First Meeting	6
Maintaining the Community Watch	7
Safety Resources	8
How to Catch a Crook	12
Important Phone Numbers	13
Sample Agenda	14
Meeting Facilitation Tips	15
Door-to-Door Conversation	16
Meeting Topics	17
Sample Flyer	18
Sample e-mail	19





Getting Started



Getting programs, including a Community Watch, off the ground takes time. Take one step at a time and ask for help when you need it. Also, don't be afraid to be creative! Some of the most successful community programs happen when unique ideas are given a chance.

1. **SELF-ASSESS** to determine if you have time in your schedule to organize a Community Watch Program and decide if you are comfortable leading meetings and facilitating discussions. Are you ready to be a block representative?

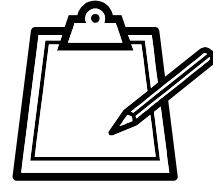
Primary Duties of a block representative:

- Discuss the program with your neighbors and get them involved in the program.
- Arrange date, time and location for Community Watch meetings with neighbors and the Office of Off-Campus Student Services.
- Communicate with the Community Watch Group and distribute bulletins and e-mail members when necessary.
- Contact the Office of Off-Campus Student Services to set-up a listserv for your Community Watch Group.
- Provide the Office of Off-Campus Student Services with monthly updates about your Community Watch group.

2. **SURVEY** residents on your block asking them about their concerns and their willingness to get involved with their neighborhood. Gather contact information from neighbors who are interested in joining a Community Watch.
3. **DETERMINE** whether or not you have enough time to be a block representative and if there is enough interest to pursue organizing a Community Watch.
4. **CONTACT** the Office of Off-Campus Student Services (OCSS) to discuss the possibility of organizing a Community Watch Program on your block. OCSS can answer any questions you may have about organizing a Community Watch and be available at your first meeting if you would like assistance. OCSS can be reached at 315-443-5489.



Planning Your First Meeting



You have determined that you are ready for a challenge and ready to organize a Community Watch Program on your block, now it is time to really get started and plan your first meeting.

1. **DATE:** determine a date that you think will work well for you and your neighbors.
2. **TIME:** determine a time that will be convenient for you and your neighbors.
3. **LOCATION:** determine a location that is conveniently located and will be conducive and comfortable for a large group of people to meet. You may decide to have the meetings at your apartment, Office of Off-Campus Student Services, Westcott Community Center or another location on or off campus. A casual environment usually works best.
4. **SET GOALS:** determine your goals for your first meeting. An example goal could be: join neighbors together and introduce them to the Community Watch Program. Do not set your goals too high. Remember, just getting your neighbors together and getting to know each other is a huge step to a safer neighborhood.
5. **AGENDA:** develop an agenda that will meet your needs to develop a Community Watch (See sample agenda on page 12.) If you have a neighbor that is interested in being involved in the Community Watch ask them to review your agenda and to give suggestions. A list of possible meeting topics is listed on page 15.
6. **SPECIAL GUEST:** decide if you would like to invite an officer from the Syracuse Police Department or SU Department of Public Safety, staff member from the Office of Off-Campus Student Services or another special guest. A list of possible guests and meeting topics is listed on page 15.
7. **REFRESHMENTS:** decide if you would like to have refreshments and snacks. Sometimes having snacks help people to feel comfortable and to get more involved. You may request funds for refreshments and snacks from the Office of Off-Campus Student Services. Request for Funds Forms are available at the Office of Off-Campus Services.



Inviting Your Neighbors

Once you have determined the logistics for your first meeting you are ready to excite your neighbors about this great opportunity. There are many ways that you can invite your neighbors to get involved, remember everyone is different and you may need to employ many different methods of advertising to reach out to all your neighbors. Remember, not all of your neighbors are students, but they still live on your street and want to be involved.

1. **DOOR-TO-DOOR:** go personally to each of your neighbors and explain what the Community Watch is and invite them to your first meeting. (See sample conversation on page 14).
2. **FLYERS:** develop a flyer that invites your neighbors to your Community Watch Meeting. You can put flyers on your neighbor's doors (do not put information in their mailbox this is against the law) or create flyers to hand out when you go door-to-door to speak with them. You can make copies of flyers at the Office of Off-Campus Student Services. (See sample flyer on page 17).
3. **E-MAIL:** if you know your neighbor's e-mail addresses this may be a great way to invite them to your meeting. Make sure you include all details in the e-mail and make the e-mail look professional so they know you are serious about organizing a Community Watch. (See sample e-mail on page 18)
4. **CALL:** if you have phone numbers for your neighbors you can call them and explain the program and that you would like for them to attend.

Reaching out to your neighbors may be the most difficult part of starting your Community Watch. Don't give up...if you show a few neighbors that you are dedicated and serious about making it happen, other neighbors will notice and want to get involved.

Don't forget to have your neighbors help you invite others...personal connections and friendships are the best way to get people interested and involved. People do not like to let their friends down.

While organizing, be sure to mention:

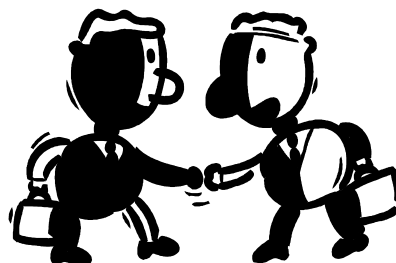
- Community Watch does not require frequent meetings.
- Community Watch does not ask anyone to take personal risks to prevent crime.
- Community Watch does not involve patrolling the streets.
- Community Watch leaves the responsibility of apprehending criminals with the police.



The First Meeting

The key to having a successful first meeting is to involve everyone. It is important that the block representative motivate and encourage those in attendance to become active participants. It is important that the block representative be able to recognize and appreciate different view points.

1. **AGENDA:** prepare your agenda and distribute it to all in attendance so that they are clear of your goals and what you would like to accomplish.
2. **SOCIALIZE:** allow time before and after the meeting for neighbors to talk and get to know one another. Make sure that each person is given an opportunity introduce themselves at the beginning of the meeting (this should be included in your agenda).
3. **GUIDELINES:** establish rules as a group that encourages honesty, participation, confidentiality and responsibility to the group.
4. **BRAINSTORM:** gather ideas as a group to determine what your goals, concerns and priorities are in developing a Community Watch. It is often helpful to record ideas on newsprint so everyone can see what has been discussed.
5. **IDENTIFY:** members who would be interested in maintaining records for your group, organizing social events, or other positions you feel are important for your group's success.
6. **INFORMATION:** gather contact information from all members to be typed and distributed at the next meeting.
7. **DEVELOP:** an action plan for what happens next. What are your group goals?
8. **PLAN:** a date, time and location for your next Community Watch meeting.





Maintaining the Community Watch

Congratulations! Now that you have formed a Community Watch group and gained the initial enthusiasm, it will require effort to sustain the initiative. Expect that as you build your group, there will be setbacks and disagreements. That is part of process, and you should not be discouraged.

1. **FOLLOW UP:** type up minutes after each meeting and distribute them to everyone in your group. Also, make sure that every member has an organizational list of members with addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
2. **INCREASE MEMBERSHIP:** it is important to try to attract new members. Utilize the energy of current members to attract new members. Don't forget to welcome new residents in your neighborhood and invite them to become involved in the Community Watch. The best way to recruit new members is through one-on-one contact.
3. **HAVE FUN:** meetings are important, but you must remember to have fun and encourage the group to be social. Plan a potluck or have a movie night.
4. **SPECIAL GUESTS:** invite a guest speaker to a meeting. Maybe the group wants to learn about tenant rights so you could invite a staff member from the Office of Off-Campus Student Services to come speak on the issue. Inviting a special guest will encourage members attend meetings and will allow everyone to learn something new.
5. **PROJECTS:** the Community Watch group should decide on a project to participate in. The project that is decided should depend on the priorities of the group. For example, if the group is interested in a litter free street, the group could take part in Adopt-A-Street and adopt your own block and do monthly clean-ups.





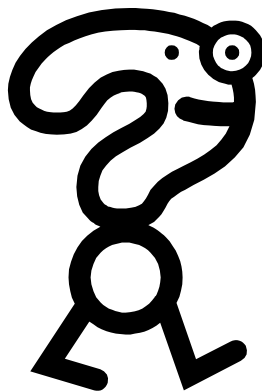
Community Watch Safety Resources

There are many resources you can utilize to educate your Community Watch group. If there is a subject that you feel you need more information on, do not hesitate to call the Office of Off-Campus Student Services to request more information or to request a guest speaker for one of your meetings.

What is Suspicious Behavior?

Suspicious activity is anything even slightly out of the ordinary for the area or time of day in which it occurs. According to the Syracuse Police Department and the SU Department of Public Safety, the most obvious things to watch for are:

- Stranger's entering your neighbor's apartment.
- Strangers trying doors to see if they are locked.
- The sound of breaking glass or other loud noises.
- Persons carrying bolt cutters or other tools.
- Persons running-especially if carrying something valuable.
- Vehicles moving slowly with no apparent destination, or without lights.
- Persons looking into apartment windows or windows of parked cars.



How to Report an Incident to the Police:

- Briefly describe the event: what happened, when, where, and who was involved.
- Give characteristics of the suspect including: sex, age, height, race, weight, hair color, clothing, and distinctive characteristics such as facial hair, scars, tattoos, or accent.
- Describe the vehicle if there was one involved: color, make, model, year, license plate number, and other special features such as stickers, dents or decals.
- You can give your name and address if you choose.

What Happens when you Call 911

1. You are connected with a dispatcher in Onondaga County.
2. Your information is obtained.
3. Dispatcher prioritizes your incident.
*Please note: Your call will be prioritized when it is received, however, if a more urgent call is received after your call, the more urgent call will be taken first.
4. Call is dispatched at the appropriate time, when an officer is available. It is important to be patient. Do not clean up evidence or disturb the crime scene.



Preparing Your Apartment to Leave for a Long Break

Important tips to protect your apartment while you are away



- Be sure to have good lighting around doors, especially those not visible from the street.
- Lock sliding doors, and place a wooden or metal bar in the track of the doors.
- Do not hide spare keys outside.
- Buy a light photocell/timer that automatically turns on interior and exterior lights at a predetermined time or when there is motion.
- Arrange for a trusted neighbor to watch over your house or to store your valuables while you are away.
- Take valuables home with you. Do not leave any valuable items near windows.
- Take pictures of valuables.
- Make sure all windows are locked and have curtains on them.
- If you have a security alarm, make sure you turn it on when leaving.
- Ask the post office to hold your mail.
- Remove all air conditioner units from windows.
- Make sure all electrical items are unplugged. (Refrigerator and a light on a timer can remain plugged in)
- Turn your heat down, but no lower than 55 degrees.
- Make sure beds, couches, curtains and other flammable objects are at least 2 feet away from heat sources.

Before Renting an Apartment...

Survey the residence for the following security features:

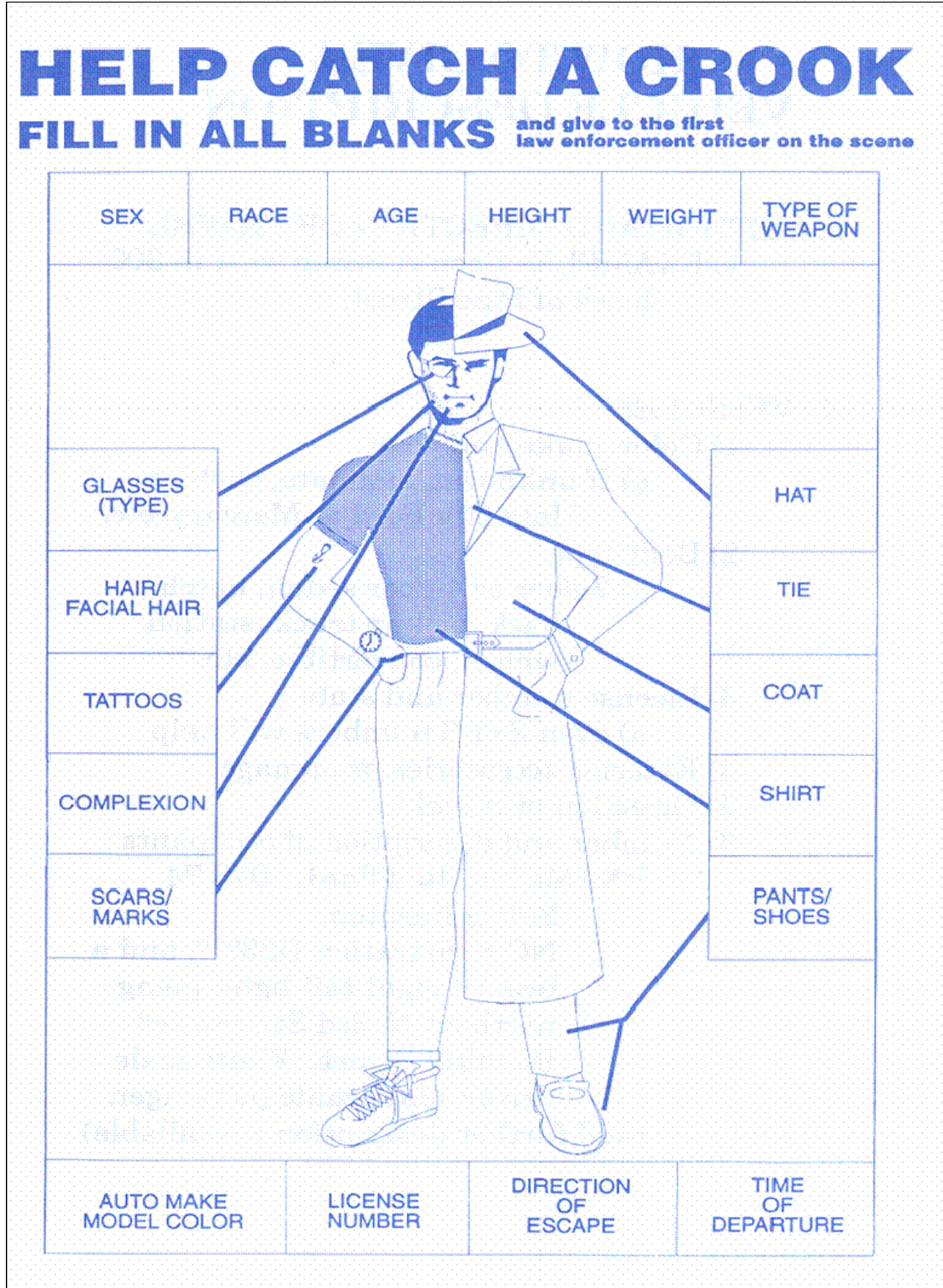
- Does the apartment have metal or solid core wooden entry and exit doors? Are these doors equipped with deadbolts? Are the locks mounted securely? Have the doors been re-keyed since the last tenant moved out?
- Can visitors be observed without opening the apartment door, either through a door “peephole” viewer or window?
- Does any outside vegetation block doors or windows from public view? Does the vegetation provide places for concealment at entrances or along walkways?
- Is there adequate lighting at the building entry doors and along walkways? Are the outer doors kept locked at all times?

General Safety Suggestions

- Be aware of your surroundings. Many crimes occur right under the nose of people who just did not notice anything suspicious.
- Safety and security are everyone’s responsibility. You can reduce the possibility of becoming a victim of a crime by being alert to your environment.
- Your safety and security ultimately depend on you. You must take responsibility for your own safety.
- Report all crime and any suspicious activity to the Syracuse Police Department or the Department of Public Safety.

How to Catch a Crook

Sample diagram of what characteristics you should be aware of when reporting a crime.





Important Phone Numbers

Important Phone Numbers

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Gas Emergency (National Grid)
1-800-892-2345

Poison Control
315-476-4766

Power Outage (National Grid)
1-800-867-5222

SU Ambulance
315-443-4299

SU Department of Public Safety
315-443-2224

SU R.A.P.E. Center
315-443-7273

**Syracuse Fire Department and
Syracuse Police Department**
911

NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

City of Syracuse Information
315-448-CITY

ESF Police
315-470-6666

SU Off-Campus Student Services
315-443-5489

Student Legal Services
315-443-4532

SU Department of Public Safety
315-443-2224

Syracuse Fire Department
315-471-1161

Syracuse Police Department
511 South State Street, 315-442-5111
473 Westcott Street, 315-472-0528

Other important numbers:

Drug “Hot Line” 315-487-8477

**Syracuse Police Department
Family Services Division** 315-442-5332

**Syracuse Police Department
Domestic Violence** 315-442-5332

City Dog Control 315-473-6608

Animal Cruelty Investigator 315-454-3469



Other

Sample First Meeting Agenda

Community Watch

700th Block Lancaster Avenue

February 8, 2006

- Welcome

- Introductions

- What is a Community Watch?
 - Purpose
 - Role of the block representative
 - Role of members

- Brainstorm neighborhood concerns

- Goals of Community Watch

- Community Watch Assignments
 - Note taker
 - Project Chair

- Plan
 - Next meeting agenda
 - Events?

- Closing
 - Date and time of next meeting

Meeting Facilitation Tips

Tips to help you lead your meeting and be a successful block representative

The facilitator is responsible for:

- Getting agreement on agenda and processes before and during the meeting.
- Conducting the meeting – make sure the group keeps to ground rules, time limits, etc.
- Guiding discussion.
- Staying neutral, asking questions and suggesting ways to approach parts of the agenda.
- Making sure the group comes to decisions and work is divided among members.
- Keeping the group on task when they head off onto tangents.
- Watching the vibe of the meeting and helping to keep energy up.
- Making sure everyone participates and no one dominates.
- Creating a safe and positive environment.
- Intervening if problems come up, dealing with concerns.
- Creating a comfortable environment – using language that makes everyone comfortable.

Strategies for good facilitation:

- Paraphrase to check for the sense of the discussion.
- Help people avoid repeating themselves by summarizing the discussion and asking for comments in areas that haven't been mentioned.
- Make suggestions for how to move forward – after discussion has gone on for awhile, try to summarize, look for agreement or sticking points, and come to a decision.
- Ask questions.
- Be positive and encourage full participation – make sure everyone gets to speak, try to notice when someone is holding back.
- Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Check briefly for agreement before moving on – make sure everyone understands the decision.
- Appoint a time keeper to keep things rolling.
- Hold topics that are off-subject and come back to them at the end.
- If someone puts an item on the agenda have them explain it.

Sample Door-to-Door Conversation

Block Representative: Hello my name is Amy Woods and I live at 741 Livingston.

Neighbor: Hi, my name is James Nelson.

Block Representative: Nice to meet you James. I am concerned about the safety on our block and I am trying to organize a Community Watch group for the 700th block of Livingston. I am hoping that you may want to join with me and a few of the other neighbors to get a Community Watch started.

Neighbor: Well, that is a good idea, but I am really busy.

Block Representative: Being a part of a Community Watch takes very little time, at most there is a meeting once per month. It mainly involves getting to know your neighbors and learning how to take precautions to protect ourselves from crime.

Neighbor: But, I don't have time to walk around our block patrolling it.

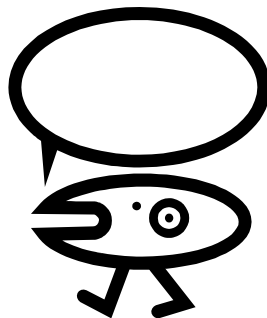
Block Representative: We do not walk about patrolling; we are merely extra eyes and ears for the police who already patrol our block.

Neighbor: Umm, well I guess I could help out; I would like to meet more people.

Block Representative: Great, our first meeting is this Wednesday at 8 p.m. at the Office of Off-Campus Student Services at 754 Ostrom Avenue. Do you know where that is?

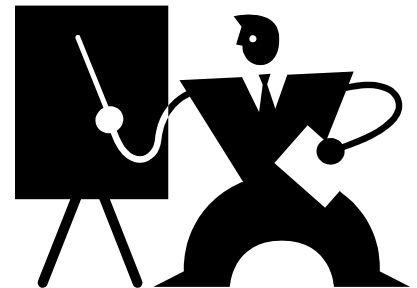
Neighbor: Yes, I do.

Block Representative: Great! I will see you then. Also, if you have any friends on the block encourage them to come with you!



Meeting Topics/Ideas

- Tenants and landlord rights
- Movie night
- Tenant responsibilities
- Identity Theft
- Potluck...have each neighbor bring their favorite dish
- What is suspicious behavior?
- How to catch a crook
- How to get involved in the community
- Game Night
- Preparing your apartment for a long break
- Get involved with community clean up and adopt your street or a neighboring street through the Office of Off-Campus Student Service's program, Adopt-A-Street
- Self-defense
- Protecting your personal property
- Security Vulnerability Check of property
- Discussion with City of Syracuse of Code Enforcement
- First Aid
- Internet Security
- Fire Prevention



*** For information or potential speakers on any of the above topics please contact the Office of Off-Campus Student Services at 443-5489.**

Sample Flyer

Do you want to help build a
safer Livingston Avenue???

The Residents of the 700th Block of
Livingston Avenue are
Joining Together to Organize a
Community Watch Group!!



**To learn more about the Community Watch
come to an introduction meeting...**

When: February 21, 2006 at 5 p.m.

Where: Office of Off-Campus Student Services,
754 Ostrom Avenue

Questions???? Please call Amy Nelson at 443-6578 or
e-mail anelson@syr.edu

Sample E-mail

Dear Neighbor,

My name is Amy Nelson and I live down the street at 714 Livingston. I am very interested in starting a Community Watch group for the 700th block of Livingston. I have been in contact with the Office of Off-Campus Student Services and it sounds like a great idea and it is pretty simple! I hope this will create a safer street and also allow everyone on the street to meet each other. If you are interested in joining the Community Watch, I will be hosting an introduction meeting on March 4th at 7pm at the Office of Off-Campus Student Services at 754 Ostrom Avenue. Please let me know if you will be able to attend!

If you have any questions don't hesitate to send me an e-mail.

Cheers,
Amy

Information in this handbook has been adapted from the following sources:

Syracuse University Department of Public Safety
Syracuse University Office of Off-Campus Student Services
City of Syracuse Police Department
www.syracuseneighborhoodwatch.org
www.gsnetwork.org
www.oag.state.ny.us/crime/neighborhood_watch/building_a_watch.html
Duke University, *Fleet Watch Handbook*