

North Shore News

AUCKLAND STORY

Guardian Angels say more can be done

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North Shore city might have the lowest crime rate in the country but members of crime fighting organisation Guardian Angels say more can be done to keep it safe.

Guardian Angels New Zealand organizer Andy Cawston says he has been approached by residents to start up a chapter on the Shore.

That comes after Mr Cawston, a Canadian who has lived in New Zealand for 12 years, set up volunteer patrols around Waitakere city to help curb increasing crime in the area.

But North Shore acting area commander inspector Les Paterson says police



SEND ME AN ANGEL: American Guardian Angels Ed Park, left, and Michael McDaniel are helping Andy Cawston set up his Auckland chapters.

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already have a number of community-based programmes in place and the city is as safe as it has ever been.

"Many residents will know that North Shore city has the lowest crime rate per person of any city in New Zealand."

He says a well-trained and resourced police volunteer group is operating and an initiative involving North Shore City Council, local business and community groups is being discussed.

Mr Cawston, a Henderson resident who lived on the Shore for five years, acknowledges the North Shore crime rate is lower but says it is still a problem and the "time to fight crime is before it starts".

He says there is also a perception among residents that they are not as safe as they used to be.

"A lot of crime goes unreported and there are other issues surrounding 111," he says.

"The police are not always able to address every callout."

Mr Cawston has not yet talked to North Shore police but says a meeting is definitely on the cards.

Mr Paterson says if anyone is considering setting up a chapter on the Shore they should discuss with police "how their resources might fit into the established model to avoid potential duplication".

"It must be said that it is admirable that people wish to donate their time in the interests of community safety," he says.

Mr Cawston and visiting American Guardian Angels Ed Park and Michael McDaniel have already met Waitakere police to introduce themselves and explain their intentions.

A member of the Reno, Nevada chapter, Mr Park says: "New Zealand police have been very open with us. They really believe in what they do and in making their communities safer."

Mr Cawston says the Guardian Angels' main approach to crime fighting is acting as a deterrent and instilling a sense of security within their community.

But he says volunteers are "not security guards", they are members of a community support organization.

If volunteers see a crime being committed they will only interfere "if it make sense to do so" and will otherwise act as reliable witnesses for police, Mr Cawston says.

He says the organization is recruiting volunteers and those interested do not necessarily have to patrol the streets.

"We do not discriminate on any basis, age, sex, culture or race. We will have pretty much anybody who cares about the community."

The group is styled on the United States organization.