

Guardian Angels will fly again

By Gary McLendon
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(July 4, 2003) — The new Rochester chapter of the Guardian Angels is starting to take flight.

The group has pushed its first patrol up a week, and the group may accept a donated building in the Monroe Avenue area for its local headquarters.

Arnaldo Salinas, senior director of the international Alliance of Guardian Angels Inc. and one of the organization's founders, and New York Region Director Frank Lee will be in Rochester today to interview, screen and begin training potential members, start patrols and negotiate a building deal.

The Guardian Angels, a community watchdog group, uses unarmed foot patrols of volunteers trained in martial arts, basic first aid, CPR and conflict resolution techniques.

Rochester chapter leader Russell Hackett said more than 20 people have asked to join the local chapter since plans to re-establish the chapter were announced Tuesday.

"We're starting to fly," Hackett said this week. "We're going to be starting patrols this weekend."

Response to the announcement has been so swift, Salinas said, that he has flown to Rochester a week earlier than planned to help get the chapter off the ground.

"We are extremely excited about re-opening a chapter in Rochester," said Salinas. "We think this time it will work out well."

Rochester's last Guardian Angels chapter closed last year after several years of declining activity.

Hackett, a veteran of the last Rochester chapter, received the OK about three weeks ago from New York City headquarters to re-establish a chapter here.

Since then, Hackett and veteran Rochester Guardian Angel Denise Eggert have canvassed Monroe Avenue and established support from about two dozen Monroe Avenue business owners, who say patrols will do the area good.

"I want to support them any way I can. We definitely need it," said Robert Gonzalez, owner of the Jewelry Outlet Boutique, 673 Monroe Ave.

"I've talked to other vendors about the Guardian Angels and they say, 'Yeah, we need that.' There are millions of dollars invested in these businesses on this street."

Support for a new Guardians Angels chapter is so great, said Salinas, that the owners of a building in the Monroe Avenue area called him Tuesday and offered to donate their building. Salinas said he will learn more about the offer this weekend.

"I wasn't slated to go up (to Rochester) until next weekend," Salinas said. "Things are moving fast."

Hackett was planning to begin patrolling Monroe Avenue next weekend, but, he said, response has been so positive the new group will begin patrols Saturday.

Anyone interested in joining Rochester's Guardian Angels chapter should attend an open recruiting meeting at noon Saturday at the Varsity Café, 662 Monroe Ave., or call (585) 342-1782.