

LOCAL NEWS STORY

Crimefighting angels fly in

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By MELANIE LOUDEN

Guardian Angels are set to spread their wings in south Auckland.

The group, an unarmed crime fighter movement, first set up in Henderson, Waitakere city. Spokesman Andy Cawston says plans are well under way to set up a chapter in Counties Manukau.

Members wear red berets and t-shirts and learn how to deal with conflict and disarm people.

Mr Cawston says the group does not take the law into its own hands, it just acts as a visible deterrent to violent crime.

The group relies on male and female volunteers aged 16 and over to do foot patrols.

"Our main mission is community outreach, looking after street kids, looking after people who live under bridges, the homeless, helping people who are disadvantaged," Mr Cawston says.

"South Auckland needs the Guardian Angels. It's a magnet for crime."



IMPORTANT JOB: Guardian Angel south Auckland chapter leader Phoenix wants to make Counties Manukau a safer place.
MARCIA JESSEN/Manukau Courier

A Howick man who already works with the west Auckland branch has been chosen as leader of the south Auckland chapter.

For security reasons he and his partner use code names - he goes by the name Phoenix and she uses Alpha 1.

Alpha 1 is the first woman Guardian Angel and their 16-year-old daughter, code name Tweety, is the youngest in the country.

Opponents say the Guardian Angels, which began in New York in 1979, are a group of vigilantes.

But Phoenix says they just want to do their bit to make safer a community troubled by prostitution, violence, robberies and domestic violence.

"I used to do the City Beats in town and I saw so much happening. I saw the beatings and the fights in the city," he says.

Alpha 1 wants to see the streets safer for when her own children grow up.

"If we don't stand up for our community and say enough is enough then in 10 years we are going to end up in a worse state than America," she says.

Members have a code of ethics to follow and while they are there to observe and take notes they are also trained in case they end up in an altercation or have to step in and help someone.

"We try not to get involved," Phoenix says. "But if it comes to a matter of life and death we have to get involved.

"We try and stay out of harm's way as best as possible."

Members are trained in martial arts, security and law, including issues such as citizen's arrest.

Phoenix says the group always tells the police when and where they are on patrol and asks for any intelligence they should be aware of. They also ring police at the first sign of trouble.

It is hoped the south Auckland chapter will be running by the end of June.

Phoenix says the group wants to hear from "people with heart" who are interested in becoming a Guardian Angel.

"We've got people from all walks of life. It's for people who want to get out there and help their community.

"It's not about being tough and martial arts."

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer should ring or text Andy Cawston, phone: 027-334-0568 or email: andy@guardianangels.org.nz.

For more information visit: www.guardianangels.org.

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