

News

Angels on east watch

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• *Howick and Pakuranga Times*

WE'LL be back, vow the Guardian Angels after their first patrol of eastern suburbs.

On Saturday night, seven members of the newly formed Manukau chapter patrolled the Highland Home Centre in Highland Park, the site of numerous late-night violent incidents in recent months (*Times*, May 11).

One patrol member, who goes by her patrol name Alpha One, says the two and a half hour walkthrough was relatively uneventful but served as an informative eye-opener.

She says the patrol disturbed an attempted car break-in occurring in the car park, the details of which have been passed onto police.

Youths substituting shop fronts for urinals were also "spoken to nicely" by the red-bereted Angels.

"For us, the first patrol was more about touching base with the bar owners and finding out about the best times to patrol," says Alpha One.

They also talked to the groups of youths who frequent the area at night.

"We let them know we're going to be around. They'd already seen us in the papers and know we don't take sides, and that we're not going to stand by and watch someone getting hurt."

She says one group from Mangere took stock of the Angels' conspicuous uniform and enquired, "what gang do you belong to?"

"There seems to be quite a bit of rivalry between the nationalities there.

"There's a definite rift between the Asian and Islander side of it," Alpha One notes.

She says it seems most of the trouble stems from youths "strutting their stuff" and attempting to intimidate others.

Alpha One says the Angels will patrol weekly from now on, though their patrol times and days will vary. Once more local volunteers have joined, Pakuranga will possibly have its own chapter, she says.

Highland Park's Lifeboyz Trust manager Jenny Carter welcomes the Angels' patrol.

Ms Carter last month organised a public meeting to address crime concerns in the area (*Times*, May 11).

She says there was a strong feeling at the public meeting that the community as well as police and businesses need to take responsibility for the issues at the site.

"It was conveyed that the community needs to get involved and actually work in partnership with the resources already in place.

"It's encouraging to see the community taking some responsibility. I think that will be borne out with its sustainability."

The Guardian Angels formed in New York in 1979 and now operate in more than 60 cities worldwide.