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## **Guardian Angels plan to open chapters in both Kansas Citys**

By ROBERT A. CRONKLETON

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The Guardian Angels organization says it will open chapters in both Kansas Citys, and a director of the crime-fighting group will visit the area later this month to begin recruiting.

Frank Lee, East Coast director for the Guardian Angels, said Wednesday that he would return Sept. 24-30.

“This is the first time for the organization to have two chapters in development that are side by side each other,” Lee said.

The decision to start the two chapters follows an informational visit last month by Lee and other members of the Guardian Angels, including the group’s founder, Curtis Sliwa.

The Rev. Golden Davis Sr., pastor at Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kan., and one of the main organizers of the effort to bring in the Guardian Angels, said he hoped to have members patrolling in Kansas City, Kan., by next spring.

“The number (needed to start a local chapter) we have is 12-24 people,” said Davis, who invited the group to the area in the first place. “They patrol in groups of four. We will take 10. We aren’t looking for any vigilantes. We are looking for law-abiding citizens, and from that we will be able to get something done.”

Details of Lee’s visit later this month were still being hammered out, but he said there would be an orientation open to the public and recruiting efforts.

“What we need to do now is get the local residents — those who want to make a difference and dedicate four hours a week,” Lee said.

While Lee is in town, he will also try to reach agreements with people to provide training.

“This trip is the finalization trip.” Lee said. “... I will not leave those cities until I am 100 percent satisfied and guaranteed that I can sign my name to something saying, ‘All right,

Mr. Sliwa, this is how it is going to be, this is who is in charge, this is their infrastructure, ” here is their schedule.’

Lee stressed that the success of the chapters would depend on the residents.

The organization recruits members by going into the neighborhoods and persuading residents to volunteer, Lee said.

“They are the ones that want to see the change, so let’s see if somebody is going to step up to the plate and actually join,” Lee said.

Guardian Angels must be at least 16 years old and not have a serious criminal background, Lee said.

While the group gives second chances to those with troubled pasts, it will not take people who have felony records. Lee specifically said it would not accept anyone who has sold drugs, committed strong-arm robbery or harmed a child or woman.

The local chapters will try to work with local law enforcement agencies to conduct the background checks, Lee said. Otherwise, candidates will be responsible to get their own certified copies.

Bishop Richard D. Prim, pastor of Kansas City Community Church in Kansas City, Kan., said feedback from the August visit had been positive, with citizens on both sides of the state line expressing concerns about crime and wanting to be proactive in supporting law enforcement officers.

“I believe that the Angels are an impetus to helping a community that desires to empower itself,” Prim said. “I don’t believe they are solely the answer, but I believe that they are an impetus to allow us to walk across the bridge together.”

The Rev. Eric Williams, pastor of Calvary Temple Baptist Church in Kansas City, who is helping the Guardian Angels, said he would help the organization integrate with existing community groups.

He said he hoped that having the Guardian Angels in the area would mean safer streets and getting those who live in the community involved in its success and safety.

“It is not going to be an end all and be all,” Williams said. “I think at one block at a time, we ought to make a difference.”