

Angels in Elmira

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Elmira - You can soon expect to see a few people wearing red berets patrolling the streets in Elmira.

Thursday night, several people showed interest in forming an Elmira Chapter of the Guardian Angels during a public meeting. Curtis Sliwa, the founder of the Guardian Angels, joined with the Bath Chapter of the Guardian Angels to explain what the Angels are all about.

Nearly 50 Elmira neighbors and officials came out to the meeting at Elmira Free Academy. Sliwa told the audience there is a need for a chapter in Elmira.

Guardian Angels is a volunteer group that patrols neighborhoods at least eight hours a week, making sure neighbors are safe. Members go through a three month training that involves learning the law, self defense, C-P-R, first aid and Guardian Angel patrol techniques.

Sliwa said although they don't need law enforcement approval, it's still appreciated.

"All we want for them is commitment and cooperation. We don't want any money. We're not coming to taxpayers and asking for money that needs to be allocated for other purposes." said Sliwa.

Although some neighbors signed up to be trained as a Guardian Angel, not everyone was convinced a chapter in Elmira will make a difference.

"I'm getting involved. I've seen things happen here and I've only lived here for five years. There's issues here." said Alan Lockhart.

"Our people don't do neighborhood watches, they don't utilize what we have, 271-HALT. If they're afraid to do that, why put on a beret and coat and make yourself a target? Would it make them any safer?" said Mary Corssley.

Organizer of the Bath Chapter of the Guardian Angels, Patricia Gilbert, says 10 people signed up to be a Guardian Angel in Elmira. Gilbert will also be helping to organize the Elmira chapter.

Elmira Police Chief Scott Drake and Chemung County Sheriff Christopher Moss would not comment about the local chapter. They said they're waiting to see how the chapter does.

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