



Bridgeton News

Villas Angels training

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BRIDGETON -- The New York City resident who led the effort to bring a Guardian Angels chapter to Bridgeton Villas enthusiastically predicted last month that the fledgling chapter's initial recruits would begin training today.

The recruits bested Guardian Angels founding member and senior director Arnaldo Salinas' prediction.

About 10 Bridgeton Villas-area residents have been training with a more advanced group in Millville for a few weeks now, Guardian Angel Christine Anetrella said on Wednesday.

The group wanted to get involved right away.

Suffice it to say, Salinas is not disappointed his prediction has turned out to be wrong.

Anetrella and her husband, David Benitez, are New York City natives who now reside in Millville.

Anetrella and Benitez, Angels for about six years and 22 years, respectively, are heading up the Holly City's Guardian Angels chapter, which began organizing earlier this year.

As they are training Millville's soon-to-be Guardian Angels, Anetrella and Benitez also have been working with the Bridgeton Villas recruits in recent weeks.

The Bridgetonians have joined the Millvillians on their safety patrols.

"We've been successful. It's been very successful. Every time we walk by and the drug dealers see us, they break up and just walk away," Anetrella said of the group's efforts in Millville.

The Bridgeton Villas chapter should be up and running on its own by August, Anetrella said.

It consists of five Villas residents, with the rest of the group coming from the neighborhoods that surround the troubled apartment complex.

"They have to get training first so that we know they are qualified (to do patrols on their own)," Anetrella said.

Paterson-based Bridgeton Villas owners Alexa Management invited the Guardian Angels to their lone housing complex in the city in March, when a majority of city council challenged the complexes to clean up on the heels of a proposal by Mayor Jim Begley that would require 24/7 armed guards.

Salinas offered his May 1 training start-date prediction after meeting with Begley and acting Police Chief Mark Ott on April 14.

While it initially will only train recruits for a chapter at Bridgeton Villas, the Guardian Angels have received inquiries about starting chapters at other housing complexes within city limits.

Guardian Angels do not carry weapons, but are well-known for making citizen's arrests.

A group of about 15 has banded together in Seabrook's Countryside Village, a troubled complex in Upper Deerfield Township, Anetrella said.

For more information on the safety-patrol organization, visit www.guardianangels.org.

If interested in joining the Bridgeton, Millville or Seabrook chapters, send an e-mail to

security@guardianangels.org.

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