

## Guardian Angels could be a help

Staff Reports  
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Where Curtis Sliwa goes, controversy follows, including right into our own City Hall, where the Guardian Angels founder came last month to make a pitch for the creation of a local chapter.

Mr. Sliwa certainly doesn't shy away from any notoriety; in fact he's faked crimes against himself to create it. But that doesn't mean the organization he founded in the Bronx nearly 30 years ago is wholly without merit. Vigilantes to some, caring and daring citizens to others, the Guardian Angels have become a symbol (and some say only a symbol) of citizens taking back their streets that is recognized around the world.

There are valid reasons why law enforcement and city officials would not want them here. The concerns with having unarmed citizens "patrolling" areas where guns and other weapons are common are obvious.

But the frequently voiced objection that they send the wrong "message" is off base.

Here is Common Council member Nick Kydes speaking at the public meeting last month at which Mr. Sliwa made his pitch: "There is a perspective from people that if Guardian Angels are walking the streets, it must be a very high-crime area. So there is a negativism when they see red shirts, red berets, that this is not safe place for me to go out to dinner. But Norwalk is a safe place."

Quite the simplistic view. Yes, crime is down in Norwalk, and most of the city is safe. But, as with any city our size, there are places in Norwalk where people do not feel safe in their own homes, and with good reason. As long as that is true, it trumps any concern Mr. Kydes or others might have about "negativism."

Norwalk Police Chief Harry Rilling is right that in places the Angels have a reputation for making a noisy entrance and then fading. But not everywhere. If they can make Norwalkers who are afraid to live where they do a little less so, their presence is worth exploring further.

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