

After witnessing attack, Bend man starting citizen crime-prevention group

By [Inka Bajandas](#) / *The Bulletin*

Published: August 08, 2009 4:00AM PST



For more information about the Bend Guardian Angels, contact David Hart at 541-389-2211

David Hart had always considered Bend to be a safe place.

That was until, among other incidents, he witnessed two young men beating a woman in March and intervened on her behalf.

Hart, 41, who has lived in Bend for 10 years, said that was the moment he knew he had to take action.

“That was kind of the final clincher,” he said.

He’d admired the Guardian Angels, a citizen crime-prevention group, since he was a kid, so he decided to start a chapter in

Bend and has spent the past several months trying to set it up. He’s arranged to use space at a dojo, where members will train in martial arts, and obtained endorsements from local law enforcement officials.

“We just need donations and members,” he said.

Curtis Sliwa, founder of the Guardian Angels, started the organization in 1979 as a way to combat and prevent crime and gang violence in New York City. Since then, the organization has grown to include chapters nationwide and internationally, according to the Guardian Angels Web site.

One of the primary ways members of the Guardian Angels work toward achieving crime prevention is through safety patrols, wearing uniforms featuring the Guardian Angel insignia of a winged eye and red berets, that walk the streets in crime-ridden areas.

The organization also has a strong focus on community service and runs programs to discourage youth from joining gangs.

Instead of safety patrols, Hart plans to have the Bend Guardian Angels chapter members mostly do community service.

The group, he said, will make presentations in schools discouraging youth from taking drugs and encouraging them to volunteer at homeless shelters and battered women's centers.

Bend Police Chief Sandi Baxter said she supports Hart's plans, which he outlined to her when they met recently. She liked how he'll focus on things like helping the homeless.

"Obviously I am supportive of that," she said.

Deschutes County Sheriff Larry Blanton, who also met with Hart, said he was skeptical at first.

"One of my initial concerns was that it would be more of a vigilante operation," he said.

But when he found out it would be all about working with community organizations, he said he didn't have any problem with it. He liked the leadership role the Guardian Angels might take.

"I think that's awesome," he said.

Hart hopes to have the group up and running by September. It will have weekly meetings at a local martial arts dojo, which is going to donate space to the group, he said.

"I really think it's going to go well," he said. "Bend is full of a lot of active people that care about the community."