

# The Guardian Angels Arrive in Rochester



Reported by: [Brian Scott](#)

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ROCHESTER, MN - It is one of the downsides to being a popular city on the grow...crime.

Local authorities in Rochester have dealt with more than a half dozen murders over the past few years, and some citizens are fed up.

They're not military, and they certainly aren't the police, but a group of seven ordinary men and women are marching through Rochester streets as the city's new face to fight crime.

They're called the Guardian Angels, and they're everyday people like you and me who volunteer their time to ensure their community is safe.

"We would become the extra eyes and ears for the Rochester Police and be out there for them, getting the info that we can for them," said Guardian Angel Michael LaPlante.

LaPlante and the other seven angels graduating from training will patrol the streets in areas that need extra attention, but they'll also help with community service efforts.

Even as they received their red berets and joined the ranks of the famed group on Sunday, they knew this would be no easy task.

"Because for many people, initially when they hear about the concept of the Guardian Angels, they think this is the Hell's Angels," said Guardian Angels founder Curtis Sliwa.

Sliwa helped form the group more than 30 years ago in New York, and after being arrested many times and facing his share of adversity, he knows what Rochester's Angels will be up against.

"The stigma of people thinking that we're vigilantes, we take the law into our own hands, that we're judge, jury, and executioner, but that's not what we do," Sliwa told the crowd in Rochester as they watched their first Angels graduate.

Even as Rochester's mayor congratulated the group., he had some reservations.

"I suppose, there'll be plenty of us looking to see if there's a little skip or something," said Mayor Ardele Brede.

But members say, their goal is to keep their community safe and sound.

"We're ready to go out there and work in our community to see what we can do," said LaPlante.

And they say they're ready to grow with the city.

Mayor Brede also expressed concern about the group's ability to include Rochester's ethnic diversity.

Group leaders said there are several other people ready to train and become a part of the watch group already.

