

Editorial: Taking back the neighborhoods

By Staff Reports

Monday, January 4, 2010

Few issues concern Ventura County residents as profoundly as crime — mainly, how not to be a victim. Even in Ventura County, where public safety is a top priority and the county's reputation as one of the nation's safest is secure, gangs and other thugs are always working to gain a foothold.

Thus, county residents are constantly being reminded by law-enforcement officials to take steps to ensure their homes, cars and other valuables don't become targets for thieves.

One deterrent is the Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program designed to help cities ensure apartments and other rental properties provide a safe environment for residents.

The Star applauds local officials for embracing it,

In effect, the program — first developed in Arizona by the Mesa Police Department in 1992 — teaches residents and landlords how to become the eyes and ears of their buildings.

Port Hueneme will host its Crime-Free Program training class Jan. 12, and it is open to building owners, managers and real-estate leasing agents. The city of Oxnard also employs the program.

"It's part of an international crime prevention program that's also in 44 U.S. states," Kelly Self, Port Hueneme's Crime-Free Program director and a code compliance officer, told The Star. "The program works because of a blend of law enforcement, landlords and tenants."

The training class, which is free, is broken into three phases. The first phase trains landlords how to screen prospective tenants, how to read graffiti and recognize gang members and drug deals.

It will be followed by a working inspection of rental property by city staff and the Police Department and, finally, there will be a safety social meeting with all the tenants of the rental property.

"It's basically a party," Ms. Self said. "We present certificates, encourage renters to get to know each other — even stressing they should make more frequent use of the properties' amenities and develop a sense of community."

Life is hard enough, without having to worry about the safety of your family where you live or getting ripped off by a neighbor. It takes courage and unity to stop crime.

That's why employing the Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program is so important to our communities.

To attend

The Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program will be Jan. 12 at the Port Hueneme Community Center, 550 Park Ave. Space is limited. For more information, contact Kelly Self at 986-6573 or kself@ci.port-hueneme.ca.us.



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