

## New neighborhood watch wants more eyes

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*The county district attorney taught residents about his office's work in a forum meant to drum up support.*

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Community leaders in the Laurelton area want residents to take notice of a newly formed Neighborhood Watch group in their corner of town.

Members hope to make their streets that much safer. Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program for citizens that is administered through the community service unit of the Irondequoit Police Department. Some of the groups have volunteers who patrol the neighborhoods they serve, while others are more loose-knit organizations.

About 120 Laurelton residents have already signed up to participate in some way with the new Laurelton Neighborhood Watch. The neighborhood had previously had a program, but it became inactive and now residents are working with police to rekindle it.

"We have had three meetings so far, and people are still unaware " of the new group, said Laurelton resident Tracy Brown, who is one of several block captains already serving in the large neighborhood in southeast Irondequoit, bordering the city of Rochester.

The group's aim is to have every street in the neighborhood, - the heart of which is bounded by Culver Road, Empire Boulevard, North Winton and Merchants roads - have at least one block captain and to eventually begin patrols.

**County Legislator** Ted O'Brien, D-Irondequoit, suggested a forum about the Monroe County District Attorney's Office and public safety to try and have the community take notice of the newly formed watch group.

Monroe County District Attorney Mike Green led the Jan. 24 forum. About 50 people attended.

In addition to the 120 residents who have signed up for the watch group, two patrol training sessions have been held for about 60 members, according to Laura Culotta of the Irondequoit Police Department's community services unit. A

third training will be held in the near future, she said.

Participants are trained to know what is considered suspicious in the area and what to look for, providing police with additional eyes and ears.

"This (group) is just building, " Brown said. "We want more people. "

In the forum, Green provided a brief overview of his office, which handles 35,000 cases a year, and the criminal justice system.

Some facts people learned about the District Attorney's Office: Its case load ranks it the largest "law firm " in the county. With 70 attorneys, it is the fourth-largest law firm in the county in terms of size.

Green then welcomed questions.

His message was clear: "Make sure you link up with all the different areas in law enforcement, " he said, from police officers right through to the district attorney's office.

He said it is important to create an environment where people are encouraged to come forward, as a witness to a crime or with information on a case.

Green also suggested that watch groups like Laurelton consider setting up some type of court watch program to track what happens when an arrest has been made.

Questions from the audience ranged from how to make neighborhoods safer (Green suggested contacting local police for that information) to why there is a need for a new, \$11 million crime lab being considered by the county. Green said the evidence developed by the lab, much like in "crime scene investigation " TV shows, can make cases stronger, but that the local lab is in very poor condition, jeopardizing that work.

"We'd like nothing better than to have all of you feel safe in your neighborhoods, " Green said.