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## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



**TAKE A BITE OUT OF  
CRIME**



**"If you've been following my advice, you know that crime prevention begins at home. But it shouldn't stay there. In fact, neighbors working together can make one of the best crime-fighting teams around. Whether you live in a small town or a big city, it's easy to get involved in crime prevention.**

**There are lots of things you can do: reporting crime . . . working with kids . . . learning about our justice system. It's up to you.**

**This booklet is full of ideas on how to get involved. So team up with your neighbors and make life harder for criminals. That way, you'll be helping me to . . ."**

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# Be A Good Neighbor

Want to know the best crime prevention device ever invented? A good neighbor. The police can't be everywhere at once, but you and your neighbors can. You're the ones who really know what's going on in the neighborhood.

Put that neighborhood know-how to work. It's simple: just use your eyes and your ears – and then your telephone. If you spot something suspicious, call your police or sheriff immediately. Don't try to stop a criminal yourself – it can be dangerous.

In cities and towns across the country, people are joining with their neighbors to fight crime. Take the initiative. Don't wait until a crime happens. Start your "good neighbor" program now.

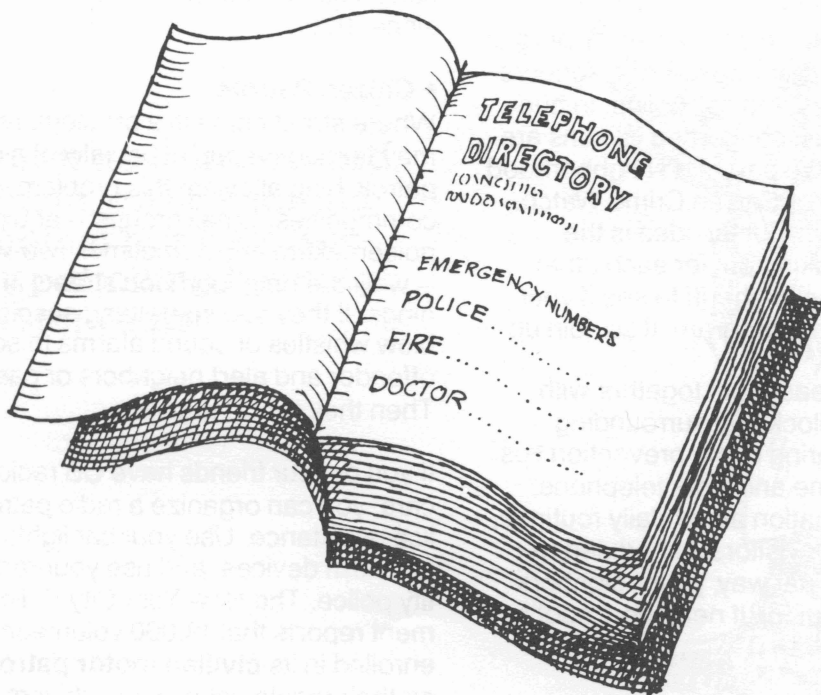
Check with your local police or sheriff's office. They can tell you –

- about specific crime problems in your area,
- the best prevention techniques,
- what to report,
- how to organize a responsible anti-crime project if none exists, and
- how your club or neighborhood group can make crime prevention part of its activities.



**“Report crime. Sounds easy, doesn't it? But only about half of all crimes are ever reported. Too bad, because police can't do anything if they don't know what happened. They say information from people like you is the key to solving many crimes.**

**Even an anonymous tip is better than no report at all. So, don't hesitate! Follow this rule: if you see something suspicious, call police – fast . . . so that police can act – fast. The longer you wait, the harder it is to catch the criminal.”**



# Neighborhood Watch

Law enforcement experts say the battle against crime is half won when people take a few simple steps to lessen their chances of becoming victims. Like keeping doors and windows locked and making sure keys don't fall into the wrong hands. It's surprising, but burglars don't always force their way in. About half of the time, they enter through an unlocked door or window, or by using a key. The fact is, victims lose more than \$400 million a year from these "no force" burglaries! That's a high price to pay for a crime that can be prevented.

Another important fact: Half of all home burglaries occur during the day when alert neighbors could spot the thieves and call police. In hundreds of communities, concerned citizens are doing just that. They're part of a Neighborhood Watch, Block Watch or Citizen Crime Watch. The names may differ, but the idea is the same: neighbors looking out for each other. Check with the police or sheriff to see if your community has such a program. If so, join up.

If not, start one! It's easy. Get together with neighbors on your block and surrounding streets. Start by sharing crime prevention tips. Then exchange home and work telephone numbers and information about daily routines, planned vacations or visitors, scheduled repairs or deliveries. That way, your neighbors know what to look out for. If neighbors spot an

unfamiliar car in your driveway or activity in your home while you're away, they know they should call the police.

## • Silent Observers

Some people fight crime as "Silent Observers." In many communities, police train senior citizens, shut-ins, housewives, and other neighborhood people to watch for and report suspicious events in their neighborhoods. Observers may report by number rather than name to protect their identities. In Battle Creek, Michigan, Silent Observers have anonymously reported crimes and received cash awards for valuable information since 1970.

## • Citizen Patrols

Where street crime is a problem, residents may fear going out, especially at night. Citizen patrols help alleviate this problem in many communities. Small groups – equipped with noisemakers and sometimes two-way radios – walk the neighborhood streets in the evenings. If they see something suspicious, they blow whistles or sound alarms to scare the offender and alert neighbors or passers-by. Then they report to police.

If you or your friends have CB radios in your cars, you can organize a radio patrol with police assistance. Use your car lights and horn as alarm devices, and use your radios to notify police. The New York City Police Department reports that 13,000 volunteers have enrolled in its **civilian motor patrol**. While on their regular jobs as taxi drivers, delivery or



"Anyone can do it. In Hartford, Connecticut, an 84-year-old grandmother has been successfully patrolling her neighborhood for years!"



sanitation drivers, they keep on the look-out for criminal activities. And police officials claim that more than 300 arrests were made just in 1 year thanks to reports by these concerned citizens.

Many apartment dwellers have formed **tenant patrols** to help prevent crime. The New York City Housing Authority has 13,000 volunteers patrolling in 700 of its buildings. Tenants take turns screening visitors and patrolling halls. They use walkie-talkies to communicate with each other and with a security guard or

police. They also meet occasionally to discuss security and learn more about crime prevention. Many tenant patrols also offer escort services for residents who fear going out alone.

Whether or not you join an organized group, you and your neighbors can make crime prevention part of your daily routines, just by watching out for each other. Remember, though, your job is to **report** suspicious activities to police. It's **their** job to handle the crooks!



**"A month after people in Austin, Texas, got their project off the ground, reported crime in one neighborhood dropped dramatically. Seattle residents who participated in a crime prevention program had 61 percent fewer burglaries than neighbors who didn't participate. And in Long Island City, New York, people who live in a large housing project say crime in the 40 buildings with tenant patrols is almost half what it was 6 years ago when patrols began."**



## **What To Look For . . .**

Two men are selling watches and portable radios “dirt cheap” out of a station wagon parked near your place of business.

You see a stranger hanging around the playground offering candy to children.

Your neighbors are on vacation, but there’s a window open on the first floor.

A stranger in the neighborhood knocks on front doors, then walks around to the back.

There’s an abandoned car in an alley.

Someone is running down your street with a stuffed pillowcase, a suitcase, a TV or radio.

You are awakened late at night by a loud scream and dogs barking.

Sometimes the signs of a crime are obvious, sometimes they’re not. Trust your **eyes**, your **ears**, and your **common sense**. Anything unusual may point to a crime.

## **What To Report . . .**

What happened? When? Was anyone injured? What did the suspect look like? Describe suspects as carefully as you can, noting unusual features such as scars or tattoos. Was a car involved? Were there any passengers in the car? Also describe the car, noting color and make and any unusual features. If possible, get the license plate number.

**Remember – no detail is too trivial!**

# Reduce The Risks

Now that you and your neighbors are looking out for each other, take a look around. Does your neighborhood have:

- Large, poorly lit public parking areas?
- Streets and sidewalks crowded with cars and people from outside the neighborhood?
- Untended vacant lots and wooded areas?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, then there are countless opportunities for crime in your neighborhood. Crooks can come and go, unnoticed. They just disappear into the crowd.

Maybe your neighborhood is different:

- Are streets and sidewalks used mostly by local people?
- Do children play in the parks and playgrounds?
- Are there public recreation areas where local residents often get together?

If you answered "yes," count yourself lucky. This kind of neighborhood typifies a new approach to crime prevention that seeks to create a "small town" environment even in large cities.

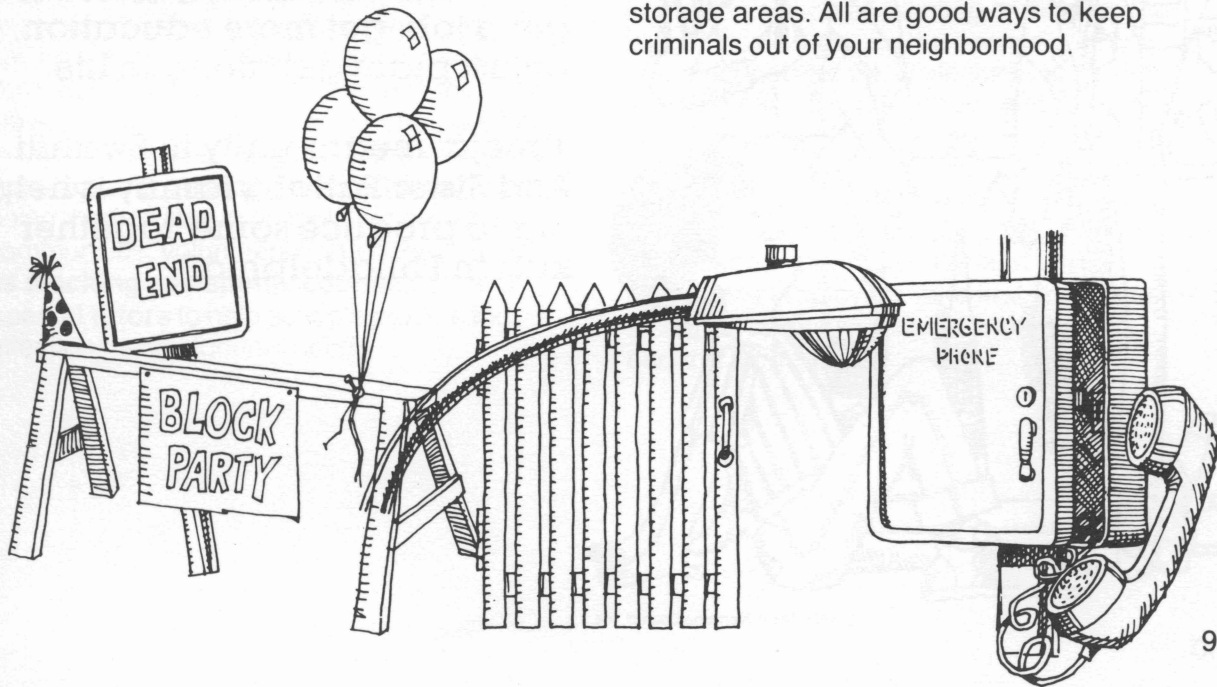
One neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut, made changes like these: Several streets were narrowed or turned into "dead ends" to discourage traffic. Residents fenced their yards to make them "off-limits" to outsiders. At the same time, neighbors held block parties and potluck dinners, and launched clean-up campaigns. One year later . . .

- More people said they were walking in their neighborhood.
  - More people said they liked using their neighborhood park.
  - More people said they weren't as afraid anymore.
- and better yet . . .
- Burglary dropped 40 percent.
  - Street robbery and purse snatching also decreased.

Of course, you and your neighbors can't just put up a sign declaring your street a "dead end." But local officials can. With an active neighborhood organization, you can alert local officials to situations needing improvement. For example, residents in the Hartford community persuaded police to patrol the local park to discourage loitering, drinking, and gambling. And when residents of one Washington, D.C. high crime area convinced the city to install new high intensity street lighting, robberies there reportedly declined by 65 percent. They say residential burglaries dropped by 44 percent, too. Many towns have installed emergency telephones on street corners linked directly to police. Just the sight of these phones may deter some muggers.

Your group can involve others in the community in crime prevention, too. Businesses, schools, and other institutions can and should cooperate in fighting crime. For instance, businesses in dense commercial areas may need to install lighting in parking lots. High schools may need to keep students on the premises at lunch time to reduce the risk of vandalism or burglary in nearby residential areas.

And this goes for everyone, businesses, institutions, and you and your neighbor as well: your goals are to make sure that crooks are easily stopped and to keep them off your property. So install fences and get rid of hiding places by cutting down tall shrubs and removing piles of junk from behind garages and storage areas. All are good ways to keep criminals out of your neighborhood.





"Sister Falaka Fattah understands kids in trouble. Twelve years ago she opened her Philadelphia home to members of a juvenile gang. She tried to give the youngsters the family experience she thought they lacked. Now her organization, the House of Umoja, has 20 homes for ex-gang members in the city. Volunteers – lawyers, police officers, probation officers and others – teach the kids the skills that will help them get a job, get more education, or just plain get along in life.

'Umoja' means unity in Swahili. And Sister Fattah's family is helping to produce some 'together' kids in Philadelphia."

# Keep A Kid From Crime

Crime touches everyone, including young people. Nearly half the violent crimes in some cities are the work of persons 21 and under. And people in this age group are often the victims of crime. In fact, 12- to 24-year olds are victims of violent crimes more frequently than any other age group. But young people can be crime fighters, too. Here are some ways to work with youth, to help them protect themselves and to encourage a crime-free life.

## • Stay in School

A teenager can find many reasons to drop out of school: frustration with "the system," family or social problems, embarrassment over not having the "right" clothes, or just simple boredom. But dropouts with little chance for a good job are likely to turn to crime. Groups like one in Charleston, West Virginia, **work with potential dropouts on a one-to-one basis**, encouraging them to stay in school. In many other communities, volunteers donate their services as **teaching assistants, counselors, and special tutors** to help schools provide the attention these students need.

Other groups offer alternative educational opportunities for dropouts. New York City's Harlem Prep, supported by business and industry, helps prepare dropouts for college. In 12 years more than 1,500 graduates have gone on to college. Project New Pride in Denver works with delinquents who have committed serious crimes. Through a number of programs, including alternative schooling, vocational training, job placement and counseling, Project New Pride helps many young people who had given up hope.

## • Jobs

Summertime **Rent-A-Kid** programs in communities all across the nation employ otherwise idle, unskilled teenagers to do household chores such as painting or mowing the lawn. People who use the service get help at a reasonable cost, while the youngsters involved earn pocket money, keep busy and possibly learn a few skills.

The National Alliance of Business's JOBS program has helped place nearly 2 million disadvantaged kids in summer and part-time jobs. Many employers "hire first, train later" — a chance for the kids to learn skills while earning some money.

- **Recreation**

Harlem's **Jazzmobile, Inc.** educates while it entertains some 300 juveniles in one of the highest crime areas in New York City. Professional artists offer workshops in music, dance, and the visual arts. They supervise community services like painting murals in school yards and holding dances and concerts in the streets. Police offer tours of the precincts and hold talks and workshops about police activities. Citizens in many communities finance **Send a Kid to Camp** programs, organize sports activities, and spearhead drives for youth centers. One group even hired gang members to build small neighborhood parks.

- **Crime Prevention**

Youngsters can learn to help instead of making trouble. It's happening all over the country. In New Orleans, for example, two members of a youth patrol helped save the lives of eight sleeping children trapped in an apartment fire. And in Harlem, a group of teenagers escorts elderly residents on trips to stores, banks and other daily errands.

In Providence, Rhode Island, volunteers for PACE (People Acting Through Community Effort) organize foot and CB patrols and provide recreational activities for kids. Their aim: to prevent arson. As a result, arson fires dropped from 85 incidents per year down to 4.

Instead of vandalizing, these young people are helping to preserve and protect their neighborhoods. One former teenage offender, now a community organizer and youth counselor, sums up their attitude: "This is my neighborhood too!"

# Play A Part In The System

Make sure your good neighbor policy includes your community's criminal justice agencies. The criminal justice system welcomes the assistance and concern of volunteers. In fact, citizens in many communities are getting involved through programs like these:

## • Join the Cop on the Beat

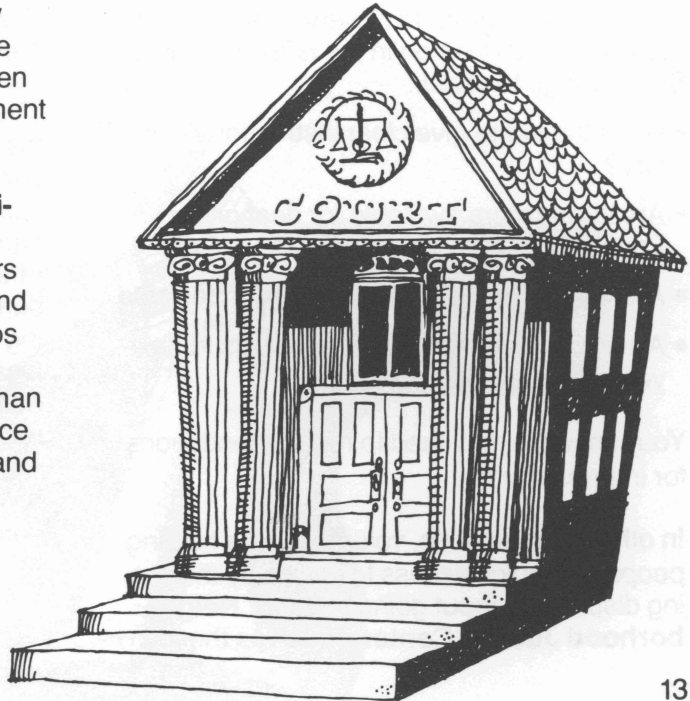
Learn how the police protect you and how you can work with them. Help them understand your neighborhood's concerns. Here's how: **Ride-Along** programs allow citizens to accompany law enforcement officers as they patrol their beats. Understanding the police officer's job helps improve relations between citizens and police. Ask local law enforcement officials about the program.

Another popular idea is **police trained citizen forces**. In St. Louis, Phoenix, Denver, and Los Angeles, volunteer reserve officers have some of the same duties, authority and responsibility as sworn, paid officers. In Los Angeles, for example, the County Sheriff's Department Reserve Program has more than 1,300 trained volunteers who serve as peace officers, special photographic assistants, and mountain rescue officers.

## • Have Your Day In Court

The American court system hasn't changed much over the last 200 years. What **has** changed is the workload. More and more people are using the court system and court calendars are increasingly overcrowded.

You can learn about our court system and perhaps help ease its burden. That's what a Chicago group did. Members of the Illinois League of Women Voters discovered that people sometimes missed their trials because they couldn't find the courtrooms. There were no signs and no directory in the courthouse,



no information office or personnel to answer any questions. People coming to the courthouse for the first time just didn't know where to go!

The League learned about this through a court watching program. They visited the courthouse daily – talking to people, sitting in on trials, and taking notes. After a few months, they presented their findings in a formal report. And they got action! Now there are maps, signs and red information telephones throughout the building.

With some training in court procedures, your civic group or community organization can set up a similar program to observe trials and understand what goes on in the halls of justice. Some things to check:

- Does the judge give clear instructions to the jury?
- Are interpreters available for deaf or non-English speaking persons?
- Are waiting areas pleasant and comfortable?
- Are there private conference rooms for lawyers and their clients?

Your answers may lead to recommendations for improvement.

In other communities, volunteers are helping people get quick access to justice by mediating disputes without going to court. **Neighborhood Justice Centers**, such as those in

Atlanta, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and more than 100 other cities, resolve many disputes that occur in daily life. Typical cases include assaults among friends and acquaintances, landlord-tenant quarrels, and consumer-merchant problems. Cases like these often drop out of the justice system. Complainants usually back down because they really don't want their neighbors to go to jail. Neighborhood Justice Centers can resolve the problem without involving the court at all.

People referred by police to a Neighborhood Justice Center don't **have** to participate, they attend hearings voluntarily. The hearing officers are their neighbors – ordinary people like you who have been specially trained to mediate.

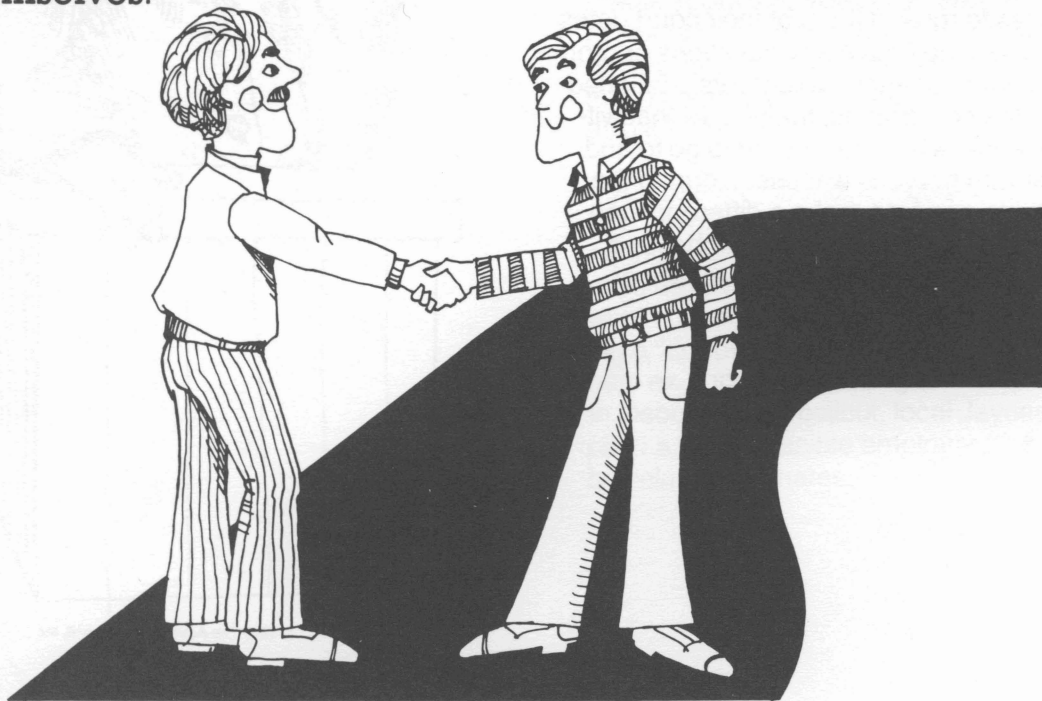
They listen to both sides of the story and help the disputing parties reach an acceptable settlement. The solution is put in writing and signed by everyone involved. Once the adversaries meet face to face, aided by the hearing officer, the controversy that seemed so unsolvable often can be resolved. By contributing some of your time and energy to your local Neighborhood Justice Center, you can help people solve their problems **and** help reduce the burden on police and courts.

If your area doesn't have a Neighborhood Justice Center, contact local criminal justice leaders to see if this approach might work in your community. Then, get involved!



"I heard about a case involving two neighbors who had argued about a driveway for years. This time they fought – and one fellow broke the other's arm. Next thing you know, they're threatening to kill each other. Don't kid yourself, they might – three-fourths of all murders occur among people who know each other.

Police referred the case to the local Neighborhood Justice Center. Both sides got to tell their story themselves – not through lawyers – and they arrived at a solution themselves. Now they share the driveway with no more arguments. That's neighborhood justice in action. People helping people help themselves."



If you should become a crime victim or witness a crime, stick with your case! Help police in their investigations. If they catch a suspect, take your case to trial. It's the only way to see that justice is done. Believe it or not, it pays to prosecute — 3 out of 4 cases that go to court result in a verdict of guilty!

What happens when you take a case to court? You'll meet with police and lawyers. You'll attend hearings and trial. It will take time. To help you and others who care enough to see their cases to trial, many communities have **victim/witness assistance programs**. Take Peoria, Illinois, for example. The Witness Information Service there calls witnesses to remind them of their court dates and to see if they have any questions or problems about appearing. Volunteers, stationed outside the courtrooms, make sure that witnesses know which courtroom to go to and even sit with nervous witnesses during the trial. These services make a difference too — witness appearance rates are higher and fewer cases are dismissed due to lack of witnesses.



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**"I know a guy who's spent the last 2 years in prison. When he gets out, he'll have clothing but little else. His job and work experiences are limited. He'll stay with a friend until he finds a job and a place to live. But his friend is also an ex-con. 'Making it' on the outside won't be easy."**

#### **• Help an Ex-Offender**

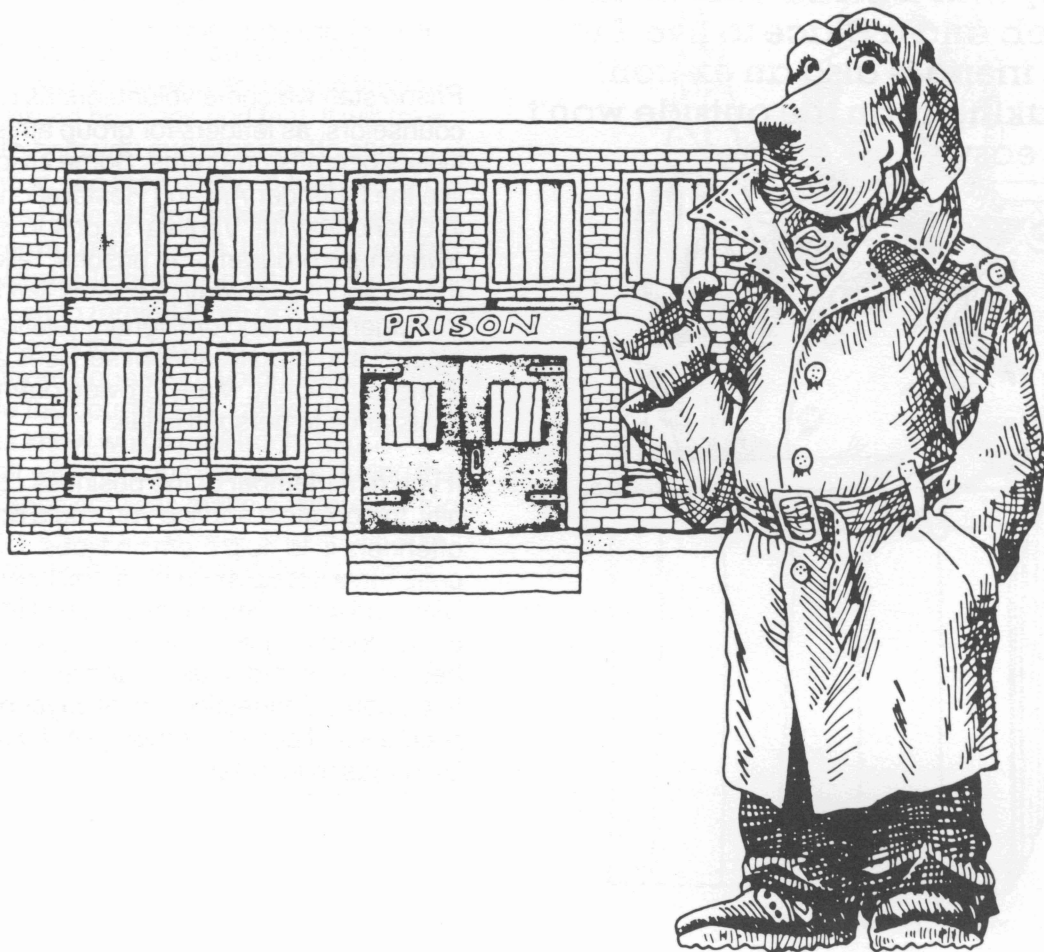
Sometimes it's so hard for ex-offenders to adjust to a new life that they fall back on familiar ways. They find their old buddies, their old neighborhoods, and new . . . victims. Soon they're back in prison.

This is where you come in.

Prison staff welcome volunteers as tutors and counselors, as leaders for group athletic activities or crafts programs. Some civic groups, like the Offender Aid and Restoration Society in Charlottesville, Virginia, sponsor "social awareness programs" in prisons, talking to inmates about everyday problems like money management, landlord/tenant relations, or alcohol and drug treatment services available in the community. Many provide one-to-one assistance to persons in jail.

If you're a member of the business community, the greatest service you could do for ex-offenders is to help them find jobs. U.S. Jaycees have set up more than 400 chapters within prisons. One Jaycee project is identifying a "contact" person in every community to help ex-cons find housing and employment. In Osborn, Connecticut, local Jaycees compiled a list of possible employers for soon-to-be-released inmates.

"Your help can make a difference! A program in Lincoln, Nebraska, screens, trains, and matches volunteer counselors with young offenders placed under court supervision. The volunteers are so successful that their clients commit 40 percent fewer crimes than offenders who aren't counseled by volunteers. That's what I call success."



“So you see, there are a lot of ways you can help take a bite out of crime. These are just a few of my favorite ideas, and there are many more. Before you and your neighbors get started, check with your local law enforcement agency for tips on crime prevention programs that are just right for your community.”

**TAKE A BITE OUT OF  
CRIME**

So you see, there are a lot of ways you can help take a bite out of crime. These are just a few of the things you can do. There are many more. Below you and your neighbors get started. Check with your local law enforcement agency for tips on crime prevention programs that are working in your community.

TAKE A BITE OUT OF  
CRIME

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## **For More Information and Assistance**

The following organizations in your area can provide additional information and assistance in preventing rural crime.

- State, county, and local law enforcement agencies.
- County Extension agents
- Texas Agricultural Extension Service  
College Station, Texas
- Texas Crime Prevention Institute  
San Marcos, Texas

The Texas A&M  
University System



**Texas  
Agricultural  
Extension  
Service**

Daniel C. Pfannstiel, Director  
College Station

*Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion or national origin.*

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