

Interesting News Articles

Emergency? MOMS group has it covered

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If Hurricane Katrina sowed a positive seed somewhere along its path of destruction, it probably sprouted in the hearts of three Hermosa Beach moms.

Nancy Amato, Tracy Hopkins and Kelly Kovac-Reedy have jump-started the city's Neighborhood Watch program, which disbanded several years ago.

And it all began when they saw the suffering of hundreds of thousands on television days after one of the worst hurricanes in the nation's history hit the Gulf Coast in August.

"We got thinking about what we can do to be more prepared in case of a disaster," said Hopkins, one of the founders of Hermosa Beach MOMS.

The trio was shocked to learn that their city did not have a Neighborhood Watch program.

Hermosa Beach police Sgt. Paul Wolcott said the Police Department ran a program many years ago.

"I'm not even going to guess how long ago it was," he said. "We did have a program, but interest in it waned and we did not hear from anyone in the community after that, until now."

Wolcott said the MOMS group's proposal is something not many cities have done before.

"Usually, the Police Department initiates the program," he said. "In this case, it's the other way round."

That could be a good thing, Wolcott said.

"These people are motivated, and that's what keeps a program like this alive and going," he said.

The Police Department has designated Sgt. Thomas Thompson as the city's liaison, Wolcott said.

So far, 15 block captains have signed up for the emergency-preparedness and crime-prevention program, Hopkins said.

"Our goal is to sign up 100 block captains by the end of this year," she said. "But so far the response has been terrific. We didn't quite expect such a positive response."

The group raised funds since late last year to supply emergency-preparedness kits to local residents. They hope to keep that going, too, Hopkins said.

"We'd even like to organize a drill on Pier Avenue where residents can participate with the help and guidance of the Police Department," she said.

The group is also looking at possibly providing block captains with BlackBerries, Palm Treos or some type of personal digital assistant.

"We found out that during Katrina, although phones failed, people were able to e-mail each other using their BlackBerries," she said.

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