

# Keeping watch for crime

Darren Handschuh - Jul 11, 2019 / 11:54 am



Photo: Pixabay

It seems like there is a social media post almost every day about sketchy characters in neighbourhoods in Vernon and other area communities.

And while police can not be everywhere, there are steps residents can take to protect not only their property, but their neighbours as well.

Block Watch started in B.C. in 1986 as a crime-prevention program focused specifically on preventing and reducing residential break and enters, and thefts from residents.

The majority of Block Watch programs operating across the province are partnered with municipalities and police detachments.

Regan Borisenko, crime prevention co-ordinator with the City of Vernon, said the idea behind Block Watch is to create groups who look out for their neighbours home and property as if it was their own.

“The program educates residents on how to look out for and report suspicious behaviour to the police. It also encourages them to get to know their neighbours in order to develop a strong and cohesive community,” said Borisenko.

“Block Watch has always been about building safe communities through the efforts and participation of the community members themselves. Its purpose is looking out for one another and working with the police to reduce crime.”

The program involves:

- Engaging with community members to encourage residential neighbours to develop into a cohesive group for the purpose of addressing a crime or community problem in their neighbourhood through increased communication, surveillance, ownership and guardianship of the neighbourhood.
- Training to participants on crime prevention techniques and effective reporting.
- Establishing a channel of communication between participants and the police for the sharing of information about crime in the community and encouraging the effective reporting of criminal and suspicious behaviour.
- Providing program signage for residences or neighbourhoods to indicate to potential offenders that the neighbourhood is committed to vigilant surveillance of their block.
- Incorporating other crime prevention activities in addition to the crime prevention group.

For more information, email Borisenko at [RBorisenko@vernon.ca](mailto:RBorisenko@vernon.ca)

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