
Citizens for Safer Communities aims to empower residents with information to fight crime

By Susan Monaghan / For the Daily Press

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VICTORVILLE — A group of High Desert residents have started a coalition to help local law enforcement by teaching citizens throughout the region about crime prevention and doubling down on neighborhood watch programs.

Citizens for Safer Communities held its first meeting in November and another on Feb. 1, with representatives from the Sheriff's Department and District Attorney's Office in attendance.

"The partnerships between the sheriff's department and our community stakeholders are essential to public safety," said Lt. Sarkis Ohannessian, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Public Affairs Division commander. "It is important that coalitions comprised of community groups, nonprofits, businesses, and private citizens all embrace public safety as a shared responsibility."

The group is developing plans to host a series of "educational sessions" with the help of representatives from the Sheriff's Department, according to Adelanto spokesman Michael Stevens.

The coalition was started by Stevens, who lives in Victorville, after his thoughts on an emergency meeting of city and regional leaders called by a Victor Valley College trustee in June 2017 to address a perceived rise in crime in the High Desert was published in an op-ed piece for the Daily Press.

In the op-ed, titled "Quit Expecting City Leaders to Solve Crime," Stevens pointed to Proposition 47 and 57 as key factors in the increased crime rate, which reduced penalties for specific non-violent crimes and gave early parole opportunities to nonviolent criminals for good behavior.

"We can no longer rely on traditional methods to make our neighborhood safer," Stevens wrote.

The coalition's current make-up includes members Joseph W. Brady, Don Brown, Carolina Gabeldon, Catherine Haney, Frecia Johnson, Michael Stevens, and Diana Carloni-O'Malley.

"I think community education is important, we must focus the efforts of the coalition on a personal level," Carloni-O'Malley said.

"The people want to know what tools they will receive immediately to help themselves or they will not participate. People want impact, action, visual return, not words."

Future dates, times and locations for the coalition's educational sessions are being coordinated with the Sheriff's Department and are set to be announced soon. For more information about Citizens for Safer Communities, email Michael Stevens at

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