Altadena Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (ACONA)
Organizing Meeting
July 27, 2010
Altadena Library

Background:

Well over a decade ago, Altadena had a coalition of Neighborhood Associations and Neighborhood Watch organizations that met quarterly to discuss issues of common interest. That coalition has not been active for 10 years, motivating a group of Altadena residents to call for the formation of such a group again. A meeting was held on July 27 to call upon others to form and join a new coalition, now called the Altadena Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (ACONA).

The notes presented here are from that meeting. The meeting was attended by more than three dozen residents of Altadena, members of the Altadena Town Council, and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

7:00 PM- 7:10 PM Brief background on the Coalition

Elliot Gold, who heads the LaCorona-Palm St. Upside-Down-T Neighborhood Association (http://upside-down-t.blogspot.com/), gave a quick background on how ACONA was formed, but pointed out that the meeting at the Altadena Library was, in reality, the organizing meeting for ACONA.

7:10 PM- 7:45 PM Five heads of Neighborhood Associations addressed "What Makes a Neighborhood Association a Success"

- Nina Ehlig- SENCH (Figueroa & Windsor)
- Bob Musselman- La Vina HOA Neighborhood Watch
- Bill Westphal (Holly Slope Dr.)
- Holly Rundberg (McNally - N. Fair Oaks – Taos)
- Elliot Gold (LaCorona-Palm Upside-Down-T)

For approximately 30 minutes, the five panel members spoke about what had made their Neighborhood Association or Neighborhood Watch a success. Their presentations are summarized in a Microsoft PowerPoint for those who would like copies.

In sum, the presenters agreed that each neighborhood will have its own motivation to begin an Association, a motivation unique to their neighborhood. But an important issue, which everyone agreed on, was not to wait to start one. Also, starting small, where a handful of neighbors agree to be active, is not a stumbling block.

7:45 PM- 8:00 PM Q&A from the audience about what the panel presented

After the panel presented, the group held an open discussion of not just their presentations, but issues those attending wanted to see the Coalition address.

Here's a quick summary of comments made.

Bob Kneisel Pasadena Neighborhood Association: Bob talked about how Pasadena has an Association already, and suggested that we in Altadena work with them. The Pasadena Neighborhood Association meets on the 4th Thursday at the Flintridge Community Center.

The group writes letters to city council, uses the public input part of council meetings to air concerns.

Carol Roberts: Asked how ACONA got together and what happens next.

Carolyn Ash: She was interested in seeing an incubator for Neighborhood Watches -- how to get started. What do you do at a monthly meeting? What do you talk about? How do you grow participation?

Nina Ehlig- SENCH: She said that their street captains attend monthly meetings and talk about all issues across the board: loose dogs, speeders, noise, fireworks. They put heads together in order to get an action plan going.

Lt. Roosevelt Johnson: Lt. Johnson is about to head Community Relations for the Altadena Sheriff's Department, and introduced himself, responding to a number of questions from those attending about issues they had. Responding to a comment that an Altadena neighborhood call was referred to Crescenta Valley Station and was blown off, Lt. Johnson said that any call for any reason is an important call and everyone at the station is being told that. Altadena Station has received funding to install 911 so that those calls won't be routed to Crescenta Valley.

> Lt. Johnson can be reached either by calling 626-798-1131, or by his e-mail, which is R1Johnso@lasd.org.

Dick Smoak: He suggested that the purpose of Neighborhood Watch is crime fighting first, and then emergency preparedness. He asked the panel what their recommendations were for starting a Neighborhood Watch.

Holly Rundberg: She said that she and Lt. Johnson are going to work on training regarding how to start and sustain a Neighborhood Watch.

Bob Musselman: He reminded everyone that they shouldn't just *think* about starting

a Neighborhood Watch, they should just *do* it. Start with two or three homes… it will grow.

Roosevelt Johnson: He explained that Natalie Salazar works with starting Neighborhood Watch groups, and that a perfect time to start a Neighborhood Watch is before a problem arises.

Natalie Salazar: Natalie, who is the Director of Community Law Enforcement Partnership Program (CLEPP), for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, said that Neighborhood Watch isn't about the Sheriffs and it isn't about crime; it's about neighbors.

      Natalie can be reached by e-mail at ndsalaza@lasd.org.

If folks want to, though, they can contact one of her Deputies:

      Deputy Douglas R. DeCesare
      Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
      Community/Law Enforcement Partnership Programs
      4700 Ramona Blvd., Room 144
      Monterey Park, Ca 91754
      (323)526-5015 Fax (323)307-0935

Devra Hall Levy: She asked what is a Neighborhood Watch, a block captain, a neighborhood association versus a neighborhood watch? She was confused as to what the difference was, but more importantly asked how do you find out who they are and where? Who does what? Where do they exist?

Greg Middleton: Responding to Devra said if you are here at this meeting, you're the person to start a Neighborhood Watch. Experienced group leaders maybe could mentor you.

Natalie Salizar: When asked what proportion of neighborhoods in Altadena have some form of Neighborhood Watch and will therefore get messages from a Coalition, Natalie suggested that maybe 1/5 of the neighborhoods in Altadena have Neighborhood Watch groups.

Molly Rundberg: She asked when should we be inviting the Sheriffs to the Neighborhood Watch meetings, and how often?

Natalie Salizar: If you started a group because of a crime, you'll probably want the Sheriffs there at your meetings all the time. Sheriffs have things they want to talk about as well. Natalie will share some notes with the group through Elliot Gold. Lt. Roosevelt Johnson will come to any meeting to which he is invited.

Question from one of the Attendees: Some neighborhoods have Neighborhood

Watch signs – that may deter some crimes.

Natalie Salazar: Public Works puts those signs up. There are also decals. Signs are about $20.

Molly Rundberg: It took about 8 months from the time they ordered them until they were installed.

Holly Rundberg: Neighborhood Watch is nationwide and has all kinds of signs.

Natalie Salazar: She suggested a national organization called the National Association of Town Watches (http://www.nationaltownwatch.org/natw/) as a good resource.

8:00 PM – 8:15 PM Discussion of the goals and objectives of a Coalition and how often you want to meet

Several points were raised. Here are just a few of them:

Listserves -- need to set one up for the coalition.

Set up a website for information sharing. Maybe partner with Altadena blog?

Roosevelt Johnson: National Night Out August 3 at Loma Alta Park 6-9:30 p.m. He wants to see more Neighborhood Watch signs in neighborhoods -- sees it as a crime deterrent, suggesting that posting signs suggests that the house is burglar alarmed. His email address: r1johnso@lasd.org.

Bob Musselman: Share best practices. All communities are different. Goals/ objectives will vary. Tell expectations for block captains so they know what the time commitment is. Similarly, need time commitments for this group (ACONA). Examples of emails for recruiting block captains.

Information sharing is the most important goal. Send out a 1-page sheet once a month dealing with a tip for preventing crime. E.g., how to make a car less vulnerable to crime.

Roosevelt Johnson: Biggest problem is that people think this is Maybury R.F.D. Need to be aware of crime.

8:15 PM – 8:30 PM Selection of date for next meeting, and wrap-up and open discussion

Most people can come in September. Tuesday seems best. Elliot will send out a notice for September or early October.

8:30 PM Meeting ended on time