

Community Watch offers programs to ensure residents' peace of mind

Hello and greetings from Community Watch. Our dedicated staff has had a very busy summer serving our residents and visitors. I have yet to experience the "peak" season here in The Villages, but I understand from several of my staff that things will get even busier for us as we accomplish our primary responsibilities and respond to resident's requests for assistance.

Please be assured that we will continue to do our best to make The Villages the best community in which to live and play.

Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to meet with several different community groups to discuss the Community Watch organization and the services we provide.

Of course, our mission statement, "To provide a safe community for Villages residents by keeping a watchful eye around the clock," is discussed, and I also cite several examples to show how we go about fulfilling that mission statement.

I always am excited about sharing our good work with our residents and I welcome the opportunity to present the Community Watch story to any community group interested in having me attend one of their meetings. I can be reached by calling the Community Watch office at 750-8201.

Today, I want to describe three programs that we provide to our residents to make their lives a little more carefree.

House Checks

If you will be away from your Villages home for seven days or more, you can arrange for a Community Watch patrol driver to check your home three times during the week at different times of the day.



**BILL
ELLIOTT**
COLUMNIST

You must register with us by completing a form at the Community Watch office at 1135 Bonita Blvd. Some of the information recorded on the form includes your contact information while you are away and a possible house key-holder in or around your neighborhood who can be contacted in case of emergency. The fee for this service is a little more than \$5 per week.

When a Community Watch patrol driver visits your home, he or she will walk the perimeter of your home to make sure everything is as it should be. If there are any signs of a problem, such as a broken window or door, the driver immediately will contact local law enforcement to investigate.

The Community Watch driver will not enter your home. At some point, the house key-holder listed on the registration form may be contacted to assist law enforcement. A Community Watch dispatcher also will call you at the contact number listed on your registration to advise you of the situation involving your home.

This is a very popular program for our residents. Community Watch personnel perform an average of 800 house checks per month, with the summer months being the busiest time (approximately 1,500 house checks in June, July and August).

Adult Watch

The Adult Watch program is a

free service that offers a sense of reassurance for our residents. Villages residents who participate in this program will receive phone calls from Community Watch dispatch personnel at times that are designated by the resident. The purpose of the call is to check on the well-being of the resident.

The Adult Watch program is easy to use. As a Villages resident, you need only to complete the necessary form and indicate the days of the week and the time of the day that you wish to be contacted.

Also listed on the form are emergency contacts and their phone numbers. If there is no response when a call is placed, Community Watch dispatch will attempt to reach the emergency contacts listed on the registration form to determine the whereabouts of the resident.

If needed, a Community Watch patrol driver will be dispatched to the residence along with a local law enforcement official.

Adult Watch has been an excellent service to our residents, especially those who are recovering from a medical procedure and appreciate a call to check on their well-being.

However, we do ask that if you are going to be leaving home on vacation, please let us know so that we don't spend hours searching for you only to learn that you are visiting your grandchildren in another state.

Resident Out of Area

Similar to the House Check program, the Resident Out of Area program is a way for residents who are away for more than seven days to be notified if there is a significant event that damages their Villages home.

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This is a free service and only requires the resident to register with us and provide the necessary emergency contact

information if needed. This is a helpful program in the event of bad weather that may include high winds, heavy rains and power outages, which of course happens a fair amount of time here in Central Florida.

That is a brief description of the three programs we offer. If you have any questions about the programs or any other services that we provide, please contact us.

To register for any of the three

programs I have described, you either can come into our office at 1135 Bonita Blvd (this is required for the House Check program); call us at 750-8201 or visit our webpage at districtgov.org.

Take care and please be safe

while you are enjoying your wonderful lifestyle here in The Villages.

Bill Elliott is the division chief for Community Watch. He can be reached at 750-8201.