

Howdy Folks !

Welcome back !!

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Well, it's been quite some time since your last newsletter. With the silly season firmly behind us, we are now fully back into the swing of things in terms of the Streetwatch meetings and the security plans for our neighbourhood.

The committee members took quite a long break over Christmas, meeting only on an ad-hoc basis to discuss ideas as they came up. We really needed the break... after the bedlam of last year, trying to get things going, handing out pamphlets in the street at the early hours and meeting after meeting.... we were certainly getting tired. The break has allowed us to consolidate our plans and recharge, ready to face the new year !

**To Re-iterate ...**

We've had an amazing response from residents over the time we've been running. But of late, we've had several queries about our core functions and our purpose etc. In the beginning, we started out by holding street meetings. These were very personal and allowed us to explain to residents first-hand who we are and what we plan, followed by much discussion so that everyone knew where we were going. As the momentum picked up, we started gathering people's details through pamphlet handouts and via friends and neighbours... and we realised that for many people on this database, it has never been fully explained the core beliefs, plans and intents of the Gillitts Streetwatch.

As a result, I'd like to go over the Gillitts Streetwatch plan again. Hopefully it makes things clear, if anyone wants any further information, please get hold of us :

## **Who we are :**

The Gillitts Park Streetwatch is an organization made up of and run by volunteer residents of the area.

## **Our goals are :**

1. Eradicate crime in our area by working together as a community and educating people to make full and effective use of both private and public security services which are available to us.
2. Create a sense of community amongst the residents, get people to meet each other and watch out for each other, getting to know your neighbours so that we can support each other while still respecting each other's privacy and individuality.
3. Work together to create an aesthetically-pleasing neighbourhood which retains as much of the natural beauty and the wildlife of the area. Encouraging the conservation of our natural resources and the promoting a peaceful, environmentally-friendly lifestyle among residents.

## **Our Origins :**

The origin of the association in August last-year was due to the excessive crime rates we had been experiencing in Gillitts. At that time, we had the highest serious-crime rate in the outer west. Since implementing the Streetwatch committee and making use of the services available, we have had 21 arrests in the area and have produced a 40% reduction in the crime rate.

## **Our Achievements :**

- This reduction in crime has primarily been through stimulating the sense of community in the area and getting the residents and their staff to work together to report suspicious behaviour and assist the police and security companies in tracking criminals.
- To this aim, we have held street meetings in many of the streets, inviting the residents.
- We have appointed street captains who are responsible for disseminating information and coordinating their streets.
- We've been sending out a newsletter updates telling the residents of the success stories and warning them of the possible things to look out for. This newsletter goes out to all residents who have given their email contact details to us. At present, that is 316 homes or **36%** of the houses in our area.
- We have raised some money in order to clear the bush and cut a police patrol road adjacent to the train line in Edward Drive. This was a major security problem, it is at the entrance to the entire area and suspects used to hide in here when being chased (it is about 12 acres), used it as a rally point when planning an attack and also stored stolen goods in here for future collection.

## **Our Plan :**

In order to facilitate all of this, we have needed to partner with third party vendors. This is where SA CAN comes in...

- The Streetwatch program is a system which they designed, based on the neighbourhood watch concept. However instead of the residents doing patrols etc. (which is not sustainable) the focus is more in facilitating fast, effective communication and providing a reliable, centralized communications channel to police, emergency services and the security companies.
- For this we have contracted SA CAN to be our communications service provider.
- They provide the free sms communications network for the Streetwatch and provide the crime reporting channel using their 24-hour emergency helpdesk.

- In addition, for paying clients they also offer a personal tracking service and emergency panic button using people's cellphones as well as providing crime survey data for the area.
- Paying customers also have their domestic workers cell numbers put into the system, for no additional cost. If a registered domestic worker sends the SA CAN call centre a 'Please-Call-Me' from their cellphone, SA CAN will call them back. This allows domestic staff a free avenue to report crime either in their area or in yours...as well as the ability to call for help in an emergency. The deal for domestic staff is : Protect you employers homes... and we'll protect your homes for free.

At the moment, we the Streetwatch maintain a database of residents who have shown an interest. We send out our newsletter to this group and are currently generating statistics on the area and creating a single point of contact so we can coordinate future plans.

In addition, SA CAN is independently contacting everyone in the neighbourhood to get them onto the sms system. Either the SA CAN Lite service, which is free and provides access to the call centre which holds your details, or the SA CAN Premium service (which we recommend to residents) which costs R57 per month per household and gives access to the cellphone panic button service and the personal tracking facility as well as crime survey feedback etc.

The SA CAN website is to register your email address with SA CAN. Although we do pass our residents contact details to SA CAN for follow up, they are legally not allowed to add your contact details to their database without your consent. Hence the 'sign-up' page where you need to enter your email address.

For anyone who hasn't signed up for the SA CAN Gillitts Streetwatch mailing list, please can you click on the link below to register. You DO NOT have to be a paying member of SA CAN to do this. The SA CAN EMERGENCY CALL CENTRE number as well as their admin number are also included below :

**[CLICK HERE TO JOIN GILLITTS PARK STREET WATCH](#)**

**SA CAN EMERGENCY CALL CENTRE (24 Hours) :- 0861 672 226**

**SA CAN ADMIN LINE (Office Hours Only) :- 0861 623 646**

### **Recent News**

The Christmas season and the period leading up to it was a success story for us. On the crime side, we had the quietest Christmas in three years according to the police. The number of serious crimes were down dramatically. Sadly, we did still have some really scary cases, but on the whole housebreakings and hijackings were way down.

Before Christmas, we noticed a significant drop off in the crime in our area. Our efforts were being successful, but unfortunately this resulted in crime being displaced to surrounding areas. There was an increase in crime in the Meadow Lane area, the other side of Gillitts, Hillcrest Park and Kloof.

As a result of this, there are now organizations similar to us starting to be formulated in Meadow Lane and in Gillitts on the other side of the freeway. We have also had a meeting with SESK from Everton,

who have offered to partner with us on securing our common boundary, as well as giving us tips on how to avoid the pitfalls they found in their inception. For those who don't know, SESK is a neighbourhood watch scheme for Everton area, they have been running for 13 years and are extremely successful in managing crime out of their area as well as involvement in the conservancy of Everton. Their input is greatly appreciated. Also being neighbours, if the two organizations secure our outer boundaries, we can ignore the common boundaries with each other as long as we know that similar efforts are being made.

### **Warning : SMS Services are not all the same...**

Recently, a group have been offering a service to our area, which allows residents to set up an 'sms mailing list' whereby you can send a single sms which gets repeated to your entire street, or a group of people. This is a fantastic system, for book clubs, sports clubs or organizations which need their members to be able to easily contact each other.

Unfortunately, this product is being touted as a security solution, for the use of sms'ing your neighbours when you have an emergency or see criminal activity.

There are some serious problems with this, as members of the public under stress do not always remember to put all the correct information into an sms and therefore may not get the response that they are relying on receiving from their community.

If a family were to receive a message in the evening of an emergency next door, it is also not wise for a husband with a baseball bat to go and investigate. We have security companies and police whose job that is, and who need to be in the primary communications loop.

The other problem is with human nature : If a person receives a message about an emergency, they can easily assume that someone else has notified the police/is responding, and do nothing about it.

Basically, this translates to the sender not being guaranteed of any response.

This is why we selected SA CAN as our communications service provider :

- SA CAN provide the sms communications interface, but the sms's are authored by the operator who answers the call from the emergency victim.
- The victims get to speak to a real person, who can reassure them, and guarantee that the information passed on is clear and concise.
- The SA CAN operator will contact the emergency services, using SA CANs direct channels and will actively co-ordinate the emergency personnel to the situation.
- SACAN have all your emergency information on record, so that if you are incapacitated, they can still ensure correct treatment.

### **Our Public Meeting**

After five months of working on various projects, we are finally ready to formalise our association ! Until now, we have relied upon the support of our legal advisers and the goodwill of the committee members to get things done. In the meantime, we have been authoring a proper constitution and getting various other formalities underway. We are now prepared to form a legal entity as an association, which will enable us to open our own bank account and will provide formal channels for our method of operation.

In order to implement this, we will have to hold a public meeting, to which you will all be invited. Stay tuned, we will be sending out a notice of the date of the meeting. We would love everyone to attend, at

this meeting we will be formalizing our existence and voting a committee. This will eventually become an AGM, which will allow us to move forward as an entity.

Well, I believe that covers everything. It's a new year and we've got lots to do. All I can say on behalf of the committee, we still love living where we live and a hearty thank you to all readers who have put their name down as interested in preserving our lifestyle and improving our security. We look forward to seeing you all at the AGM, until then we'll keep in touch with any further news.

## **Large Scale Development in our Area**

As many of you may know, the Emberton Driving range has been sold.

The developer who has bought this land has come up with a fantastic plan, involving 600 units of accommodation, as well as some light commercial use. The accommodation alone will put another 1000 cars into our neighbourhood, at least 25% of which will drive down Ashley Drive and other small roads in the morning and evening to and from work.

You can only imagine the effect this will have on traffic, not to mention the load on the environment that the sewerage works will have.

Not to mention the other questions such as where the children of this many residents will attend school... there has not been a new government school built in our area in over 15 years, notwithstanding the massive development which has taken place and the influx of residents.

There is a public meeting for interested and affected parties, if you object to this development going ahead unchallenged, please attend. Only by putting feet on the floor, will we be able to ensure that development, unstoppable as it may be, at least happens in a controlled and sustainable manner.

The public meeting for the Emberton Golf range development is Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010 at 17h30 at the Kloof Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting is to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for this development. We will be putting together some further information on the development plans which we will send out at a later date. We urge everyone to attend this meeting as whatever happens there will impact on the Park.

Cheers !

Best Regards,

Charles Atkinson  
Gillitts Park Streetwatch Committee