

Guardian Angels set up new home near Cheesman

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It may not be a permanent home, but the Guardian Angels recently set up a new headquarters near Cheesman Park.

The new office, located at 2100 E. 14th Ave. on the corner of 14th Avenue and Vine Street, is the nonprofit's biggest office since its chapter became active in Denver, said **Sebastien Metz**, the group's leader. This is the ninth office the Guardian Angels have occupied since the Denver chapter became active in 1993, he said.

The Guardian Angels new headquarters, a former law office that's owned by the Sewall Child Development Center, 1360 Vine St., eventually will be demolished, though a timetable has not yet been set, Metz said.

"It could be months, it could be years," Metz said. "We do have a limited time here, but we'll make good use of it while we're here and make an impact on the neighborhood."

The Guardian Angels are made up of volunteers who conduct safety patrols -- primarily during the weekends -- in local neighborhoods to help deter crime. None of the members carry weapons and drug and alcohol use are forbidden during patrols, Metz said.

The new office is spacious and includes room for a dojo, which members use for combat training, and several rooms for offices. The building also has a kitchen and a working shower, Metz said.

"It's absolutely the biggest place we've ever been in since we came to Colorado," Metz said. "The Angels are not used to such luxuries."

Metz said the new headquarters, which formerly was located at Eighth Avenue and Santa Fe Drive, will help boost retention rates among the group's volunteers. Currently, the Guardian Angels boast a volunteer force of about 70 people, though only a dozen or so are "hard-core" members, he said.

The group has been struggling with retention since Metz underwent heart surgery in 2005 that resulted in several strokes. He has since reassumed control of the Denver chapter, which he helped start, along with several other chapters around the world.

While the Angels still will patrol the areas of Capitol Hill and downtown Denver, they expect to become more active in the Cheesman Park and Congress Park neighborhoods, Metz said.

