

York Guardian Angels hope to motivate Harrisburg residents to form chapter

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SEAN SIMMERS, The

Patriot-NewsGuardian Angel, Jon Gibbs, of York stands guard on the corner of 13th and Market Street in Harrisburg. The York chapter of the Angels was brought into Harrisburg to help patrol the streets as a result of the recent gun violence.

Clad in their trademark red berets and white T-shirts imprinted with angel wings, 13 Guardian Angels from York marched through Harrisburg areas plagued by recent gunfire, inviting residents to take back their neighborhoods.

They walked down Cameron Street, past bullet-riddled windows of a drug rehabilitation center, up Market Street to 13th Street, where they "posted up" along a block, watching from all directions.

"The criminals are only getting away with what we allow them to get away with," said Mike Smith, head of the York chapter of Guardian Angels, as he and York County officials came to offer assistance in setting up a local Guardian Angels chapter here.

Residents greeted them with peace signs, beeping horns, and thanks, but some were pessimistic.

"That's their sense of hopelessness -- they've lost hope. I'm here today to give them hope that something can be done," he said.

Smith said the Guardian Angels, unarmed but trained in self-defense, are a visual deterrent to crime in their weekly patrols.

In York, two armed sheriff's deputies accompany them, and the patrols are credited with helping achieve a 15 percent drop in crime in the last five months, said Steve Chronister, York County commissioner who helped arrange the combined patrols.

Smith, 41, a native of York, is a former drug dealer who started the Guardian Angels chapter after losing his brother a year ago due to gun violence there.

"I come from this. I understand what it is," he said, adding that he got calls from Harrisburg residents who've had enough of the violence. "I think they're fed up. This is something they can do."

Smith also has a program for youth -- the Temple Guards, a champion drill team.

"They have to have some deterrent to the lifestyle -- they need a job component, a mentoring program," he said.

He said he's gotten calls from several prospective leaders of a Harrisburg Guardian Angels chapter. "We will help train 'em, but we can't patrol their streets for them," Smith said.

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verytrue says...

If you ever considered being a vigilante in order to reduce crime, joining the GA would be the best alternative.

Posted on 06/25/09 at 9:58PM

MartinX says...

I was a GA in Baltimore back in the summer of '88. Sad comment on Harrisburg that GAs feel it necessary to stop by, but glad to see them out there.

Posted on 06/26/09 at 4:58PM

guantanamera says...

They should get some guardians angels in harrisburg 24/24 or more police officers.

Posted on 06/26/09 at 11:01PM

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