

Angels in Klerksdorp?

The Guardian Angels were started by people who had finally had enough of crime.

Curtis Sliwa, a night manager at a McDonalds in the Bronx, New York, got fed up with his customers being harassed by vagrants and gangsters and decided to do something about it. In 1979 he organised some people and they volunteered to start cleaning the streets, initially with mops and brooms, and somehow the area started to stabilize.

After a year, Curtis Sliwa had 60 volunteers. He expanded to patrols for the subways where people were being mugged on a daily basis. When the authorities conducted a study of train violence a year later they found that the violence on all the trains had escalated, with the exception of one train - the number 4 subway express, the so-called 'mugger

express'. All that was different on this train was Sliwa's volunteers.

Cities in Europe, Brazil, Japan, the Philippines, and New Zealand have since benefited from this idea of community solidarity. Curtis Sliwa has also trained members to make citizen's arrests if they witness a serious crime occurring.

Today those volunteers are unified in global alliance, known as the Guardian Angels: their red berets and distinctive badge seen as a symbol of safety everywhere. New York no longer carries the stigma it had at that time. It is now considered as "one of the safest large cities in the world". They re-wrote history and re-wired a culture of violence.

They are ordinary people, who have committed themselves to a profound social and political concept - the idea is that ordinary citizens can organize and work together to solve social problems. The Guardian Angels is a non-profit community outreach and service organisation with its primary focus on public safety, which began with a few who had a dream that it should be possible to walk the streets safely and without fear.

So what does this mean for Klerksdorp? Watch this space for more information on the GuardianAngels...

