



Diane signs the Charter designating Calgary as a Safe City



Diane and students with the "Key to our Safe City"

November 2005 Newsletter

**Alderman
Diane Colley-Urquhart**

SEARCH FOR CITIZENS

Calgary was the first major Canadian city designated as a **Safe City** by the World Health Organization and the Safe Communities Foundation in April 2003. City Council endorsed the Charter and our commitment to the safety of Calgarians by encouraging the sharing of safety promotion and injury reduction practices at the community level. The work to date however has mostly been at the policy level. Now I want us to be the first group of communities in Calgary to actively engage citizens – both young and old alike – to work together to make our communities safer.

A criminal act requires two things: an available target and a motivated offender. Crime prevention can either focus on property protection or it can tackle the social and economic conditions that are most likely to create offenders. Experts agree that a community will reap the greatest benefits by investing in long-term action that deals with social issues that are the root causes of crime and the fastest way to react to crime is to remove opportunities.

The new action-orientated **Community Safety Advisory Council** in Ward 13 will examine all aspects of safety needs in our community, public spaces, workplaces, schools and in our homes. I am pleased to announce the appointment of **Mr. Gerry Lang** as Chairman of the Council. Gerry and his family have lived in our community for over 16 years, and Gerry has been an active community volunteer – including coaching youth soccer and basketball.. Gerry has served on the Board of Directors of the Shawnee/Evergreen Community Association for 8 years and helped out on a number of committees as well. As a member of the Calgary Police Service, Gerry has over 26 years service as an officer working in District Policing, Traffic, and the Commercial Crime Unit to name a few.

Gerry's **Search for Citizens** is underway to find people to be actively involved on the Council in helping with safety audits, identifying safety concerns, identifying current assets in place such as programs and key stakeholders, and to develop action plans for each community. Community residents are in the best position to understand, describe and identify solutions to safety issues within our communities. Gerry is ready to roll up his sleeves and bring community residents together to begin working on our community safety action plan.

Safety and security issues span all aspects of our day to day life and contribute to our sense of well-being and the quality of life of our families, friends and neighbors. Crime and the fear of crime can also lead to a negative perception of our individual safety, and require each of us in our communities to be involved and engaged in protecting and preserving the communities we call home. Our reputation for being a safe community is one of the key factors that both families and business consider when deciding to relocate or invest.

A 2004 survey conducted by Safer Calgary found that most respondents felt that crime increased in their neighborhoods over the past 3 years rather than decreased. The most prominent safety concerns among respondents were related to:

- drivers and pedestrians (including drivers who ran red lights or used cell phones, pedestrian safety at crosswalks and school zones, walking on icy sidewalks and driving on streets)
- bullying in schools
- theft of property
- invasion of personal safety – ie., victims of crime, the environment, and pollution

The survey also revealed that the majority of respondents used some precautions frequently (such as wearing seatbelts, locking doors at home and car doors, following safety rules at work, and not drinking and driving), but used some precautions less frequently (planning safe walking routes, car alarms, walking in groups, reporting suspicious persons or activities in neighborhoods to police, participating in training before trying something new, reporting safety hazards to appropriate authorities, practicing escape plans in the event of a house fire, using transportation methods other than driving, using environmentally friendly ways to control pests, and composting. Young adults reported even lower use of these precautions than adults.

The cost of implementing community safety practices is low, especially when compared to the cost of ignoring crime and the fear of crime. Although Calgary is a relatively safe city, we know that not all crimes are reported to police, especially “hidden” crimes like violence against women, children, seniors and people with disabilities. Fear of crime can be as harmful as crime itself, especially when people fear crime in their own homes and neighborhoods. The **Community Safety Advisory Council** will work to identify community safety initiatives that are relevant in Ward 13 such as educational initiatives and mentoring programs for young people, changing the physical environment through urban design, installing closed circuit television monitors and improving security.

The **Community Safety Advisory Council** will include representatives from each of the Community Associations in Ward 13 as well as citizens at large who are interested in promoting community safety. We also want each Community Association to form their own Community Safety Committee to assist us with our work. We will also involve youth from each community as future leaders to provide their insight to community-based solutions for community safety. The Council will review all issues of concern related to public safety in Ward 13 and the City at large, and will host community forums and workshops and provide a voice for citizens. The Council will also be a forum for City departments and public agencies to present to the Ward 13 community leaders who can provide them with meaningful feedback. Finally, the recommendations of this Council will assist me in providing feedback on issues to Council and Standing Policy Committees.

Please consider putting your name forward to work with Gerry on this important community initiative by emailing me or contacting my office if you have any questions.

"Your community can be a "Safer Community" with your help!"

As always, you can contact my office regarding this or any other civic matter at 268-1624, by email at dcolley@calgary.ca, or through my website, www.aldermandiane.ca. Alternatively, you can contact '311.'