

## For Immediate Release

Contact: Chris Sanfilippo  
314-589-6222



## Citizens Take Leading Role in Community Safety

*Citizens Hold Event Designed to Inspire Community Involvement and Implementation of Neighborhood Ownership Plans Throughout the City*

**October 3, 2011, St. Louis, MO** – After being named the Most Dangerous City in America year after year, dozens of citizens across the City of St. Louis have said enough is enough. These courageous warriors have decided to take action and take ownership for safety in their own neighborhoods by implementing a Neighborhood Ownership Plan. Tonight at 6:00pm at Bishop Ellis Hall, 5939 Goodfellow Blvd., St Louis, MO 63147, citizens from across the city gathered together to spread the word and encourage others to stand up for safety and launch ownership plans.

“As a resident and business owner in the City of St. Louis, I know that only I and my neighbors can make my neighborhood a safe place,” said Michael Petetit, Chairperson, Lafayette Square Safety Committee. “When we worked together to manage our own crime issues, to patrol our streets and to monitor criminal cases in our neighborhood, we had our lowest rate of crime in five years.” Two years ago, Petetit and his neighbors took action, banded together, and partnered with police to launch initiatives that would help reduce crime in their community such as citizen patrol teams and victim advocacy teams. These initiatives were collected and are the basis of the Neighborhood Ownership Model, which is a platform from which neighborhoods can develop their own safety plans.

According to Petetit, Lafayette Square experienced one of its highest rates of crime in 2009 and the neighborhood was ranked the 27<sup>th</sup> safest neighborhood among 79 city neighborhoods. In just one year since citizens took ownership, their crime reduction efforts resulted in an increase to the 9<sup>th</sup> safest neighborhood.

Criminals target neighborhoods where they think they have a low risk of getting caught. They also know the neighborhoods that are more likely to tolerate bad behavior. Neighborhoods that don’t have involved citizens are easy targets. “Our police department has some of the best technology available to law enforcement and it certainly impacts our fight against crime,” said Chief Dan Isom, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. “Still, it all pales in comparison to the tremendous impact of citizen involvement. When citizens work with police and prosecutors, it sends a message to criminals that says ‘not on my block, not in my neighborhood.’ That message is more powerful than any technology we can buy.”

Since late 2009, when neighbors in Lafayette Square first took action, Petetit and his team have worked with other neighborhoods to help them launch their own ownership plans. To date, Dutchtown, Bevo Mill, North Pointe, Penrose/O’Fallon, Greater Ville, Hyde Park and Shaw are all at various stages of implementing initiatives. No two plans look exactly the same. Each neighborhood has its own unique crime issues and opportunities, and citizens have organized initiatives into three categories:

### **Citizen-Based Solutions: *Solutions Driven by Citizen Initiative and Leadership***

- **Neighborhood Planning Team** – A group of individuals willing to follow the Six Step process to develop a Neighborhood Ownership Model.
- **Neighborhood Safety Boards** – Long-term committees created by each neighborhood to coordinate the efforts of crime-fighting solutions. Appoint a resident as a coordinating chair to help the team manage the safety goals and plan.
- **Citizen Patrol Unit** – Neighborhood groups assign neighbors to organized units to patrol streets. These members are trained to identify problems and engage law enforcement to intervene when they believe a

crime is occurring. The members are also trained to understand the needs of your neighborhood and to report back on problems identified during their patrol.

### **Government Partnerships: *Citizens Leverage Government Agencies for Enhanced Education and Resource Allocation***

- **Neighborhood Orders of Protection** – An order by a judge prohibiting a criminal from going into a part of the city as either a condition of bond or probation.
- **Dedicated Beat Officer** – Collaboration between a neighborhood and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in which a beat officer is specifically assigned to a neighborhood to patrol, educate, and support the coordination of crime-fighting efforts.
- **Victim Impact Statements** – Victims provide statements to judges to ensure a judge understands how specific crimes and criminals negatively impact their neighborhood. This is very helpful during the sentencing period.
- **Neighborhood Impact Statements and Appearances** – Victims and witnesses of crime are a powerful tool in the criminal justice system. Cooperation and court appearances can support better prosecution of criminals. Residents in partnership with the prosecutor on the case, give statements to the Court on the impact a particular crime or type of crime has on their neighborhood.

### **Technology-Based Solutions: *Technology Solutions Operated by Citizens***

- **Cameras** – Place privately purchased cameras throughout your neighborhood as both a crime prevention tool and a tool that can catch crime while in the act.
- **Neighborhood Website/Blog** – A neighborhood-controlled website that serves as a communication tool for neighbors to monitor crime, patrol schedules, provide crime alerts, etc.
- **Email Distribution Crime Alerts** – An email alert system that keeps neighbors informed of criminal activity, court dates, schedules, etc.
- **Crime Alert Phone Chains** – Phone chains in which citizens call each other and inform them of important information within the neighborhood.

Citizens have garnered unprecedented support from public officials. “Neighborhoods that actively take ownership of their safety have lower criminal activity and better quality of life. The public is the 800 pound gorilla in the criminal justice system,” said Jennifer M. Joyce, St. Louis Circuit Attorney. “When they work with police, prosecutors and the courts, citizens have more power than all law enforcement agencies combined. With citizen support, we have a nearly 100 percent conviction rate.”

“Using best practices and imaginative strategies for community safety, stability and improvement, the Neighborhood Ownership Model casts citizens in the leading role,” Mayor Francis G. Slay, City of St. Louis

“Citizen participation is key to our criminal justice system,” said Presiding Judge Steven Ohmer, St. Louis Circuit Court. “The more information judges have, the better equipped we are to make decisions. When citizens work with the authorities to help gather accurate and complete information, we all benefit.”

For more information on starting your own plan, visit [www.circuitattorney.org](http://www.circuitattorney.org) or call the Community Affairs Bureau at the Circuit Attorney’s Office at 314-622-4941.

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