

Community connection focus of Neighbourhood Support

Words & photo: Geoff Lewis

Neighbourhood Support groups cover about 22 per cent of dwellings in Hamilton but the coverage could always be better, says Neighbourhood Support area co-ordinator, John Evered.

Based in what was the Hamilton North community policing centre, the job of Neighbourhood Support is to act as a liaison within the community and between the community and the police.

"Neighbourhood Support exists to help put the community back into the community. If there is an emergency in your neighbourhood, it is great to know there is support around. It really came into its own during the Christchurch earthquake where our networks were used by Civil Defence.

"We keep a database and, if there is concern about certain activity in an area – like burglaries or the activities of con-artists or people 'casing' an area, we can work out which groups could be concerned and send them targeted information. This helps to heighten awareness. People think because they live in a more affluent area they're safe. People have the attitude that it will never happen to them – that is not the case," explains John.

Hamilton Neighbourhood Support has about 950 groups across the city, ranging from four households and often up to 46 households in the rural lifestyle block areas. The organisation recommends groups of about 12-20 families.

Field officer Kylie Morgan's job is to encourage people to see the benefits of belonging to a Neighbourhood Support group. "It's about helping to reduce the fear of crime, helping

people help themselves and creating community connections. We partner the police in the community and organise things like Neighbours' Day, anti-bullying initiatives and our stand at the Waikato Show. This helps us get a sense of how people are feeling about where they live."

Neighbourhood Support has its own website www.nshamilton.org and Facebook page.

Hamilton Neighbourhood Support will host a stand, as part of the Wellbeing section of the Waikato Show April 7-9. At the show, Neighbourhood Support will distribute information and enrol interested people into their local groups.