

## Meet Millie Arnold, Town East II

Participating in Mesquite's neighborhood program is second nature for longtime resident Millie Arnold.

Millie Arnold and her husband, Dennis, are graduates of the Citizens' Police Academy – a 12-week course where participants get a look at the inner workings of the Mesquite Police Department (MPD) as well as local crime issues. Both are now active members of the academy's alumni association; Millie as a team leader.

Their son, Dennis Jr., is a captain at MPD. Millie said having a son who is in law enforcement – particularly in Mesquite – is a “definite incentive” to participate in the City's neighborhood group program, but it was the Citizens' Police Academy that most drew her interest.

“The education obtained by participating in the classes was an eye opener and motivated me to become more involved,” she said.



So when she retired in 2015, Arnold decided to become involved in her Town East II neighborhood group, which was started by retired Dallas County constable Bob Braddock in 2012. Today she leads the group but is hesitant to claim the title of president.

“I've never officially referred to myself as a 'president,’” she said.

“I'm more of a coordinator but I have been responsible for scheduling meetings and speakers for a few years.”

The Town East II group joined with the Range and Astronaut streets groups in an effort to increase membership and participation at meetings.

“We had 28 neighbors who attended a recent meeting,” she said. “When we were individually trying to coordinate the meetings, we might have six to eight people in attendance. I would be delighted if more neighbors would invest their time and I would encourage anyone who is trying to coordinate a neighborhood group to reach out and expand their meetings to include everyone.”

Arnold said the combined groups participate in National Night Out (NNO) each October, and members are actively seeking ways to increase attendance at future NNO events. She said the groups also are making an effort to bridge communication with motels located along U.S. Highway 80.

Arnold said municipal leaders and staff take an active approach to working with neighborhood groups throughout the city, as well as members of the police department, code enforcement and other City staff.

“Chief [Charles] Cato has attended several of our meetings and we’ve had MPD officers – including the canine officers – attend,” she said. “We’ve had every City department that impacts Mesquite residents attend our meetings.”

The Arnolds stay busy with other community activities, serving on boards, volunteering with Historic Mesquite Inc., staying active at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church and reading to children at Motley Elementary School. Both also are members of Mesquite Elks Lodge No. 2404.

In other words, they have plenty on their plates to keep them busy even without their neighborhood group. But, Millie said busy schedules shouldn’t keep people from joining a group or doing their part individually.

“Most everyone is busy working, raising a family and with social activities,” she said. “But if we had truly active neighborhoods, everyone would communicate and watch out for one another. Each neighbor has to become more aware of their individual neighborhood.”

Arnold encourages all Mesquite residents to become more involved close to home, even if they are not involved in a neighborhood group.

“Take a moment to identify your next-door neighbors on all three sides of your home,” she said. “Do you ‘neighbor’ with them? Everyone can make a difference and learn how to reduce crime.”

She said the combined efforts of the Town East II, Range and the Astronaut streets groups should serve as an example of cooperation. She added that she’d like to see groups from across the city come together.



“There has been only one meeting with all neighborhood leaders presenting information about their groups,” she said. “I feel it would be beneficial to have more frequent leader group meetings to learn from one another. There’s no reason to remake the wheel, so to say.”

Having called Mesquite home since 1958 when “everyone knew their neighbors and windows and screen doors remained opened and unlocked,” Arnold said the city has grown immensely from the small farming community it once was.

But she said Mesquite still has a small-town feel even with a population approaching 150,000.

“Mesquite continues to grow with new businesses and a wonderful community to raise a family,” she said. “It’s a unique city providing any resident an opportunity to become involved in the community. Where else can you live today in a city this size with the Mayor, City councilmen, City Manager, chief of police and fire chief recognizing you and knowing your name? This is a rare commodity in 2019.”

For more information on the City’s neighborhood group program, call Yolanda Wilson, Manager of Neighborhood Vitality, at 972-216-6473, or call MPD’s crime prevention office at 972-216-6600.