

Meet Sherry Williams, Rutherford

Getting to know the people who live around you can often make for a more harmonious neighborhood.

For Sherry Williams, that means participating in the City of Mesquite's neighborhood program. She has been active in the Rutherford group about eight years – serving as president the last five.

"I wanted to know more about keeping my neighborhood safe and get to know more of my neighbors," said Williams, who returned to her hometown along with her husband, Ed, in 1973 after her family moved away years earlier because of her father's military career. Williams has lived in her Rutherford home since 1989.



"Getting to know our neighbors helps to reduce crime because we watch out for each other. The more we know one another, the better we can be aware when something isn't right and report it."

Williams said the Rutherford group has about 45 to 50 active members who attend regular meetings but also participate in community-based efforts such as Addressing Mesquite Day, neighborhood trash pickups and National Night Out. The group has promoted neighborhood groups in the annual Mesquite Rodeo Parade and, last August, held a community spaghetti dinner as a fundraiser.

Attendance at the meetings has grown from just 15 to 20 people only a few short years ago. Williams said she'd like to see those numbers increase even more.

"I wish we had more [participants], but at least we have representation from the whole [Rutherford] area," she said. "This is the hardest goal to accomplish in a neighborhood group. In most cases the main time investment is just two hours a quarter [and] we are always looking for ways to encourage people [to get involved]."

And while the Rutherford group does have an active Facebook page to facilitate communication among members, Williams said she prefers the up-close-and-personal approach.

“I personally feel that being involved is more than just reading something online,” she said. “We need to be able to voice our concerns as well as share positive statements about our neighborhood to one another in person. Discussing things in person helps stimulate ideas that we maybe wouldn’t think of online.”

As an example, she cites a traffic concern that had been a regular topic of discussion within the group. Through the work of a City councilmember and senior City staff, what had been an ongoing issue culminated with the installation of a blinking red light that has greatly increased safety on Pioneer Road.

“If the City hadn’t worked together with the neighborhood group, I personally believe this wouldn’t have been resolved,” she said.

Williams gives plenty of credit to City and elected officials for their increased participation and support that has helped the neighborhood program grow citywide.

“City councilmembers have gotten more involved in the community. They personally have helped organize groups in areas that didn’t have them and they are very accessible, which means a lot,” she said. “The City also hired a Neighborhood Vitality Manager (Yolanda Wilson) who helps groups with various needs and training. This shows they are serious about our neighborhoods.”

Chief Charles Cato and the Mesquite Police Department also play a key role, Williams said.

“Mesquite PD works closely with neighborhood leaders – helping in whatever way they can, especially officers that are assigned to the groups,” she said. “Officer Torrey Rhone is our group officer and I feel like I can contact him anytime about anything concerning our neighborhood. He is always very responsive and is definitely a friend and partner to our community. Chief Cato has been a speaker at several of our meetings and is always willing to take questions – even staying after meetings to talk to our members.”

Williams encourages other Mesquite residents to either join an existing neighborhood group or start one if their neighborhood isn’t already participating.

“Neighborhood Watch is simply a program of neighbors watching out for one another,” she said. “No matter how many police patrols go through [a neighborhood] each day, no one knows their own neighborhood better than the people who live there. We need to be the eyes and ears for law enforcement where we live.”

Williams also is quick to offer a sales pitch to families outside Mesquite who may be looking to put down roots in a new hometown.

“Mesquite is a great place to live,” she said. “It has a ‘small-town’ atmosphere but close to many ‘big-city’ amenities. It’s a friendly city and it’s easy to get to know people. We have a multicultural population, which means that there is a place for everyone.”

She also points to a housing stock that caters to various family incomes, as well as developers beginning to build executive homes to cater to higher-income families. “The Mesquite school district and a stream of new businesses opening or relocating to the city should also make Mesquite an attractive option,” she added.

“I love living here and I’m thankful to be a part of making Mesquite a better place to live,” Williams said. “One of those ways is by being a part of a neighborhood group.”

For more information on the City’s neighborhood group program, call Yolanda Wilson, Manager of Neighborhood Vitality, at [972-216-6473](tel:972-216-6473), or call Mesquite Police Department’s crime prevention office at [972-216-6600](tel:972-216-6600).