

# Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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## “Safe Community”



Norfolk is on its way to becoming designated as a “Safe Community USA”, one of only four selected cities in Nebraska. Although most people like to think their homes, workplaces and schools are safe places, there are only 240 safety designated cities in the world who have taken extra measures to ensure that their citizens live and work in safe areas. There are just forty Safe Community designated cities in the United States and Norfolk would join only Beatrice, Omaha, and the Scottsbluff/Panhandle area as designated safe areas in Nebraska.

The Safe Communities organization is part of an International Safe

Communities movement sponsored by the United Nations World Health Organization Center on Community Safety Promotion based in Sweden. In the United States the program is administrated through the National Safety Council.

Two years ago City of Norfolk Police Chief Bill Mizner was approached with the idea of Norfolk becoming a Safe Community because of his and Police Captain Leon Chapman’s past work with the Council on a defensive driving program. He agreed to work on applying for the designation while the Safety Council paid the \$7500 application fee.

Chief Mizner and Captain Chapman then brought together a group of people who are part of an ongoing effort to promote safety and wellbeing in the Norfolk community. Those members have been meeting on a regular basis for two years sharing what they do to make the community safe and discussing what other safety measures or programs could be adopted in the city.

Organizations with representatives on that committee include the Norfolk Public Schools, Nucor/Vulcraft, Faith Regional Health Services, the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce, Bright Horizons, the Norfolk City Council, and Affiliated Foods.

Members of the group identified many programs currently held in Norfolk to promote safety including the Bike Rodeo sponsored by Faith Regional, intruder drills and youth traffic safety efforts at the Norfolk Junior High School and texting while driving awareness programs by the JOII organization at the Norfolk Senior High School.

After the initial Safe Community application was reviewed, representatives from the National Safety Council came to Norfolk in February for two days to see for themselves what safety programs are available in the city. They heard an injury prevention presentation and a description of safety programs such as the Patch Health Fair at Faith Regional Hospital. They observed a Tai Chi demonstration at the Norfolk Senior Citizen Center. At Northeast Community College, students demonstrated safe texting tips and described other safety programs held on campus. The City of Norfolk Police Department gave a program on the National Night Out police/community partnership program the city is involved in and had a tour of the emergency operations center at the department. A program on how the Norfolk community worked together in the 2010 flood was also held.

Corey Privett, safety coordinator at Vulcraft, gave a presentation on workplace safety to the members of the Safety Council including hazardous waste/pharmaceutical cleanup.

Discussion at the March Safe Communities committee meeting centered on how the various organizations in the area can improve its safety efforts.

“We don’t want to be safe just to get through our safety audit. At Vulcraft, we participate in a volunteer protection program which is a partnership with OSHA to make our workplace safer. We really strive to take our safety culture at work into our homes,” Privett said.

He said that with all of the safety measures now taken at manufacturing plants, “it’s safer to be at work than at home or on the highways.” He added that there are more costs spent on injuries in the home than on job related injuries. Of the injuries that have occurred in the past year 60% happen at home, 35% happen on highways and 5% happen at work.

“We really want to make a difference and not just for a sign coming into town saying we’re safe or a designation on a letterhead. We honestly believe that safety matters. Safety impacts us all in a positive way,” Privett said.

The committee’s goal is to get the whole Norfolk community excited about safety. “We want the number of injuries to be a zero. That is a possible goal,” Mizner said.

A meeting with the National Safety Council members after their safety tour of Norfolk was overwhelmingly positive. A comment made by one of the members was that Norfolk being designated a Safe Community was a “slam dunk.”, nearly ensuring a designation by the World Health Organization. Chief Mizner said the committee hopes to be approved and notified this summer with a ceremony celebrating the designation to be held in August.

At that time the city will receive a five year designation. In order to renew their designation in five years, they must show progress they have made in safety measures in the city.

“It’s the community that will help us reach the goal of being a Safe Community, not the committee’s. We need everyone to be on the same page of safety. Promoting safety is just the right thing to do,” Chief Mizner said.