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Angels show the flag on 118 Ave. Neighborhood watch group comes to Edmonton

By **VICTORIA HANDYSIDES**, Special to Sun Media

As passing motorists honked their approval, Edmonton's Guardian Angels prospects took the streets Sunday.

Led by Angels' founder Curtis Sliwa and several members of the newly-formed Calgary chapter, about 20 recruits and supporters marched down 118 Avenue, the city's most notorious stroll for prostitutes.

Sliwa, who formed the group in 1979 to combat crime in his hometown of New York, says that he's seen an urgent need for the group here in Edmonton. He added that potential members don't need to be big or intimidating.

"We've got people that look like they're off the pages of GQ magazine, and guys that look like they drink Geritol and take Ben-Gay baths," he said.

"We've got a husband and wife team that don't look like they could break down a brick wall with a spinning hook kick and a reverse punch, but who can still be trained and make a difference in their communities."

For supporters of the group, the Angels' arrival in Edmonton couldn't have come soon enough.

Former Montreal Angel Allen St. Arnaud works as a security guard at a bank on 118 Ave, and experiences crime first-hand on a daily basis.

"If you walk down our streets here, you can see drug dealers, prostitution, stabbings, and women getting attacked at night- they're all too common."

Final selections of suitable candidates will be made by May 27. From there recruits will undergo three months of training before assuming their self-appointed duties.

Calgary member Greg Martin was impressed with Edmontonians' response to the red berets.

"A lot of people give us the title of 'vigilante'. They see us running around in bomber jackets and berets, and they think we're a gang. That couldn't be further from the truth- we're a neighborhood watch, just more visible."



Guardian Angels Founder Curtis Sliwa addresses those assembled to take part in a training walk of Edmonton Guardian Angel recruits led by members of the Calgary chapter of the Guardian Angels along 118 Ave starting at 34 St Sunday morning. Photo by Brendon Dlouhy, Edmonton Sun.