

The Value of Talking: free open-line telephone links

Hi

My name is Nick Miles I am a Police Officer in Leicestershire, UK (Miles136@aol.com) my current role includes co-ordinating & tasking volunteer police officers (Special Constables) and community volunteers toward crime reduction initiatives and developing links with the community.

Some years ago, as a Community beat officer, a local cable TV & telephone provider enabled subscribers to enjoy free calls between 6pm and 7am, 7 days a week. The residents all bought these hands free / loudspeaker phones which they basically left on 'open' to a friend or relative on the estate. In that way they used to chat about issues on the estate literally as they happened.

Although looked upon as merely a promotional tool, the effects were very interesting. The facility or its benefits were never measured. The anecdotal evidence showed that by enabling people to talk to each other, families, neighbours and entire streets were coming together. Incidents of crime and disorder were reduced, partly due to people telling each other and coming out to "have a look" (professionals call it using physical presence!). It's appreciated that the use of the system is different to a radio link - not mobile nor one to many - but the use of communication which is of benefit to the community and helped reduce crime. I hope this idea may be of interest to colleagues - especially those working with cable phone companies. Do the baby bell companies in the US offer such a service?

Our department will shortly be purchasing some radios for Neighbourhood Watch Teams. The aim is to provide them with a facility to talk to each other.

Long May Talking Continue!!

Nick Miles