

# Citizens cut crime rates in Bull's Eye

*Community support was a big factor in the success of Operation Bull's Eye in Northeast Central Durham, police say.*

**By Laura Medlin**

Durham VOICE Staff Writer

Operation Bull's Eye, which concluded in July 2011, significantly reduced crime in a 2-square-mile area in East Durham over the course of four years. That could not have happened without the help of dedicated community members.

There was a more than 50 percent decrease in violent gun crimes since July 2006, which was more than double the citywide reduction for violent gun crimes. There was also a significant reduction in the sounds of shots fired and calls to the police regarding drugs and prostitution.

"There is no way we could have achieved a 50% decline in violent gun crimes in that area by ourselves. It took a real team effort, and that includes the community," Jason Schiess, the analytic services manager at the Durham Police Department, said by email.

Community activist Wanda Boone said a number of groups made Operation Bull's Eye a success: law enforcement, the city council, county commissioners, judges and the mayor.

Boone said there are many groups for citizens to get involved in if they want to help reduce crime in their neighborhood.

"Citizens in this city are poised to make a difference and they've already started," Boone said.

One organization that is helping people to make a difference is Partners Against Crime (PAC), a volunteer organization that is a collaboration between citizens and police. There are five districts in Durham. Northeast Central Durham is included within PAC 1.

PAC meetings give people an opportunity to bring their concerns before police and for police to respond to them. Boone said about 75 people come to the monthly meetings at Holton Career and Resource Center.

Priscilla Barbee of Durham has attended some PAC 4 meetings south of the Bull's Eye. She thinks they



Staff Photo by Laura Medlin

**Priscilla Barbee, a lifelong resident of Durham, watches her son play soccer at Forest Hills Park. She thinks organizations like PAC are important because they mobilize the community to get involved in crime prevention.**

are important and useful because they get the community involved. She said Durham has a bad reputation for crime, but she feels safe.

Citizens on Patrol, or Citizen Observer Patrol (COP), a part of PAC, allows citizens to take a more activist approach to preventing crime. COP members patrol the district in uniform on the lookout for suspicious activities.

"The way we prevent crime is to have more citizen involvement," Boone said.

Neighborhood Watch is a similar organization in which volunteers, led by block captains, watch for unusual activity in their assigned area and look after their neighbors' houses when they are away.

"I think we will see the motivation of people at the neighborhood watch training," Boone said.

Project Safe Neighborhoods, East Durham Children's Initiative, Bands Against Destructive Decisions and Neighborhood Improvement Services are instrumental in mobilizing community members to prevent crime, Boone said.

"The part that needs to be heightened and increased is the influence of citizens acting in concert with law

enforcement," Boone said.

Boone is the chair of the Public Safety Committee in Northeast Central Durham, a co-founder and executive director of Durham Together for Resilient Youth, and the founder of Woman2Woman. Last year she was a co-facilitator of PAC 1.

"There are a lot of complex factors that make Northeast Central Durham what it is today, and there is no more powerful change agent than a community that cares about its future. That cooperation and commitment by the community is essential for these gains to be maintained or to grow even bigger," Schiess said.

## MORE INFO ONLINE

**PAC 1:** <http://www.durham-ncpac1.org/>

**COP:** <http://durhamnc.gov/ich/op/DPD/Pages/COP.aspx>

**Neighborhood Improvement Services:** <http://durhamnc.gov/ich/cb/nis/Pages/Home.aspx>