

# Malverne-WestHempsteadPatch

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## Muggings Spur West Hempstead Mom to Action

After her 17-year-old son was mugged twice in West Hempstead, Terese Russo-Santoro took action to improve her community.

By [Robin Robinson](#) | [Email the author](#) | February 21, 2011



Terese Russo-Santoro and her son Noah, 17, stand near one of the Neighborhood Watch signs recently posted in West Hempstead.- Photo Credits:[Robin Robinson](#)

When Terese Russo-Santoro's 17 year-old son, Noah, was mugged on the way home one evening last summer, the West Hempstead native did what any parent would do. She comforted her son and called the police to file a report.

"The police from the Fifth Precinct were great," Russo-Santoro said. "They responded immediately. They were at my door within 10 minutes."

But when her son was victimized a second time, just a month later, in broad daylight, she knew she had to take action on a community level.

Russo-Santoro sought the help of Town of Hempstead Councilman Edward Ambrosino, who has been responsive to the needs of the community, playing an influential role in the [recent closure of the Courtesy Hotel](#).

"My husband and I met with the councilman in his office to talk about what happened to our son and crime in the community overall. He didn't just listen to our concerns, he offered concrete ideas and help," said Russo-Santoro.

Ambrosino suggested she spearhead a Neighborhood Watch program in her community and provided her with the information she needed to get started.

"The councilman's office provided us with fliers we needed to get the word out about organizing a Neighborhood Watch Program," she said. "We were able to personalize and distribute them to our neighbors, and he put us in touch with the Problem Oriented Policing (POP) Unit, of the Fifth Precinct."

The POP Unit acts as a point of contact and liaison between the Neighborhood Watch captains and the police department. With Russo-Santoro's initiative and councilman Ambrosino's support, there are Neighborhood Watch signs going up around West Hempstead right now that designate blocks that are participating in the program. The first of several signs were posted during the second week of January.

As of now, there are Neighborhood Watch signs on Grantland Avenue, McKinley Street, New York Avenue, Donlon Avenue and there are more to come.

Rosalie Norton, president of the West Hempstead Community Support and Civic Associations says, "the new commander of the Fifth Precinct and the head of the POP Unit have both been invited to our next meeting on March 21 to discuss what's going on in the community and how the Neighborhood Watch Program works.

"We'll have more information in the Association's upcoming newsletter," Norton added. "It's important for people to know that participating in their neighborhood watch programs simply means being the eyes and ears of your community, not the arms of the law."

Russo-Santoro is hoping more of her neighbors will participate and come to the meeting on March 21.

"What I want to emphasize is that participating in the neighborhood watch program doesn't mean we want anyone to chase down robbers or take on the responsibilities of the police department," she said. "In fact, that's the last thing we want. But if you see something suspicious, be a good neighbor by watching out for your neighbors, pick up the phone and call the police. They'll take it from there."