

# Crimestoppers to become more visible in St. John

BY JOHN H. WALKER

L'Observateur

Published/Last Modified on Wednesday, July 15, 2009 8:08 AM CDT

<http://www.lobservateur.com/articles/2009/07/15/news/doc4a5ce8524d6a6161759565.txt>

Crimestoppers is alive and well in St. John Parish. It's just that not too many people know about it.

That's about to change, though, as the organization will soon be erecting a billboard on U.S. 61 between River Parishes Hospital and East St. John High School. In addition, L'Observateur will begin publishing public service announcements to help make the community aware of the organization's presence.

Darlene Cusanza, executive director of the Crimestoppers program that serves eight parishes in the region — Orleans, Jefferson, St. Tammany, St. Bernard, St. John the Baptist, St. Charles, Plaquemines, and St. James parishes.

"We actually helped solve three crimes here (St. John) last year," said Crimestoppers Executive Director Darlene Cusanza. Cusanza was a panelist at last Thursday's Town Hall meeting held at Rising Star Baptist Church, and she was hopeful of giving residents another card to play in the fight against crime.

"We don't ask for your name," she told them. "We don't want to know your name ... we don't have caller ID."

Cusanza said one reason Crimestoppers, begun in Albuquerque, N.M. in Sept. 1976, is successful is the fact the program doesn't require the identity of those who provide information.

"It's a layer to help protect the person," she said. "If no one ever knows the identity, there can be no retaliation or retribution."

While one billboard will soon go up, St. John Sheriff Wayne Jones said more are needed.

"We need at least six total," he said, adding that "with the economy the way it is, you'd think some of these sign companies would be willing to help out."

Jones said he would "work on" getting some more locations for signs.