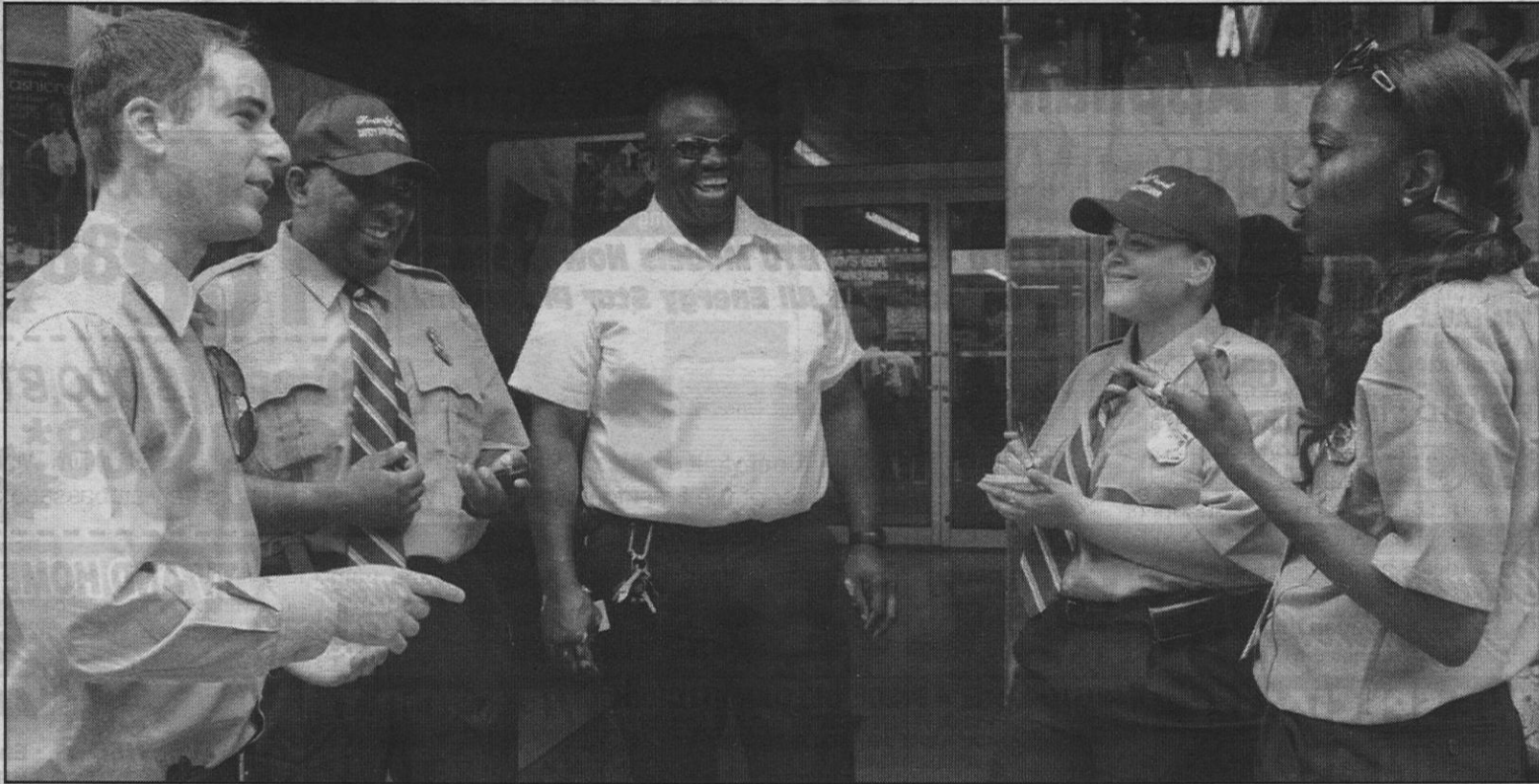


# BUSINESS

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BILL ACHUFF / FOR THE TIMES

**Tim Wisniewski (left), executive director of the Frankford Special Services District,** is joined by safety ambassador Rahsaan Allen, supervisor Kevin Cousins, and safety ambassadors Sofia Cepeda and Sadequa Armstrong as they await Mayor Nutter's arrival outside a clothing store on Frankford Avenue, south of Orthodox Street. The new safety ambassadors will patrol the business corridor, from the Frankford Transportation Center to Womrath Park.

## Safe and sound *in Frankford*

“ It has been effective in reducing crime and making shoppers feel safer and more welcome. ”

► **Tim Wisniewski, executive director, Frankford Special Services District**

**By John Loftus**  
Times Staff Writer

Seeing men and women in blue uniforms on Frankford Avenue is nothing new, but Sadequa Armstrong, Sharnese Green, Sofia Cepeda and Rahsaan Allen are just that.

The four, along with their supervisor, Kevin Cousins, are the business district's new “safety ambassadors.” Their job is to help shoppers, check in with business owners and generally keep their eyes on the avenue.

Their first day was June 24 and one of their first stops was at the Agape Restaurant on the 4500 block of Frankford Ave. to meet local entrepre-

neurs who were gathered there for a business-card exchange.

Cousins and the four safety ambassadors are restarting a program that existed in Frankford in the mid-1990s, said Tim Wisniewski, executive director of the Frankford Special Services District. Allen, Armstrong, Cepeda and Green will patrol five days a week, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and sometimes a little later, Wisniewski said. They won't be on the avenue on Sundays or Wednesdays, but the days could expand, he said.

They'll help shoppers with directions and bus schedules, and they'll also escort shoppers if requested, Wisniewski said. Business owners will

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## SAFETY

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see the ambassadors regularly.

"They will visit every single business on the avenue weekly," Wisniewski said, "to see if they have anything to report or if they need any help."

Quality-of-life issues also will be part of the ambassadors' responsibilities.

"They'll report things like graffiti and broken street lights," he added.

And they'll represent more eyes on the street. They will document all suspicious activity that they see.

"They're not police," Wisniewski said. "They'll observe and report."

While the ambassadors patrol the business corridor from the Frankford Transportation Center down to Womrath Park, where the avenue comes out from below the El, they'll be in contact with one another by walkie-talkies and by cell phones. Business owners and shoppers can call the ambassadors at 267-777-SAFE.

The idea behind the program, Wisniewski said, is to promote commerce by building a perception that Frankford is a friendly and safe place to shop.

"This is practiced all over the country in different business districts," Wisniewski

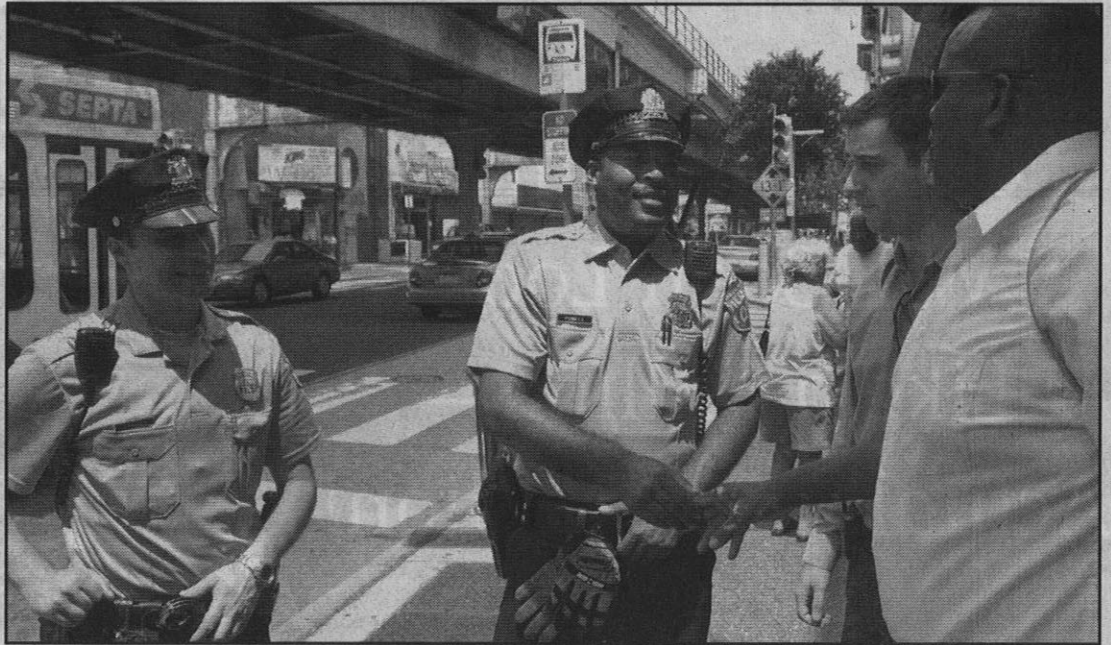
said. "It has been effective in reducing crime and making shoppers feel safer and more welcome."

In Frankford, he said, "the idea is an old one." There were safety ambassadors in the 1990s, he explained, and the program had been paid for by Frankford Hospital, which is now Aria Health.

"It had been one of my goals to bring it back," Wisniewski said, adding that a survey of area business owners earlier this year showed that their priority for the corridor is safety.

But rebooting such a program can run into some big money, he said. Some good fortune in the form of state dollars helped.

The four ambassadors, who live either in Frankford or other Northeast neighborhoods, were hired through the EARN Center on Frankford Avenue. Not only did the center help select the top candi-



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**Beat police officers Dan Corbo and Ernest Powell** chat with Tim Wisniewski, executive director of the Frankford Special Services District, and safety-ambassadors supervisor Kevin Cousins.

dates for the job and train them in customer service, but their salaries will be paid with state funds funneled through the center, Wisniewski said. Cousins will be paid by the Frankford special-services dis-

trict. ••

*For more information, call Tim Wisniewski at 215-535-2637.*

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