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A new beat - 4 brothers, 3 with law-enforcement experience, now oversee apartments

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ARLINGTON When George Donovan of Lewisville and his three brothers in New York bought the Arlington Square Apartments at 1500 W. Lovers Lane, they knew they had a lot of work to do.

So the brothers kicked out tenants they thought were causing trouble. They painted. They towed away abandoned cars. They increased the lighting and planted flowers.

They also teamed with Mission Arlington, which brought exercise equipment, regular Bible studies and other activities to the 71-unit complex where one-bedroom apartments start at \$400.

"We were looking to do something bigger, and we wanted to do it in a community that was up-and-coming," said Kevin Donovan. "We wanted to do something where we could make a difference."

Kevin, John and Robert Donovan, all of whom live in Malverne on Long Island, N.Y., started visiting Texas a decade ago when their older brother, George, moved to the state for his job in the airline industry.

They bought the apartment complex in February 2006. Since then, the New York brothers have visited regularly to help George Donovan with the investment.

John and Robert are policemen, and Kevin is retired from the New York City corrections department.

On Monday, George Donovan oversaw the opening of a computer resource center with four computers donated to the complex by Mission Arlington. Though his brothers couldn't make it, Donovan said the event, which drew City Councilwoman Lana Wolff and Mayor Robert Cluck, is a milestone for his family and for the complex's residents.

"It's better now than when I lived here before," said Deadra Smith, who moved into an apartment with her three children in December. She lived at the complex in 2001.

"It's been remodeled, and it's much quieter."

Police calls for service at 1500 W. Lovers Lane were up 44 percent in the year since the Donovans took over.

But police say it's not uncommon for calls to increase when owners are working with residents to monitor suspicious activity and reduce crime. The number of offense reports taken from February 2005 to February 2006 was the same as from February 2006 to February 2007, according to police statistics for the address.

George Donovan said he sees the progress anecdotally and believes the statistics will change over time.

"I don't get the calls in the middle of the night like I used to," he said.

Cluck said it's good to see apartment-complex owners eager to improve their property.

"People who are really here every day and want to make things better are the ones that are going to be successful," he said.

Even five-year resident Sabrena Curry, whose husband has taken the complex to court over a rental dispute, acknowledges that the place looks nicer.

"It makes you feel better about just walking through," she said.

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Though the police statistics don't yet reflect a decrease in offense reports at 1500 W. Lovers Lane, co-owner George Donovan is optimistic.

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George Donovan and his brothers have worked to bring gym equipment, Bible study and, as of Monday, a computer center to the apartment complex.

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Luz Maricela Reyna sweeps her porch at the Arlington Square Apartments. The Donovans bought the complex in February 2006.

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