For the second time, in less than five months, Charlestown Block Watch members joined in emergency care efforts required by electrical outages caused by weather events.

As Wednesday morning (January 28) dawned cold and icy, with 50 percent of Charlestown without electricity, city staff immediately contacted the American Red Cross and Greater Clark County School (GCCS) officials to establish shelters to provide warmth and food to anyone needing assistance. Then Block Watch captains were called to action to solicit volunteers who could provide manpower for the shelters.

Mike Marra from GCCS assisted with getting Jonathan Jennings Elementary School open and available for one shelter, as it had electricity. The Arts & Enrichment Center (A&E) was powered by generators, and was also open for residents and deserving city employees who needed to warm-up and take a break from their continuous snow removal efforts.

When September's hurricane winds downed trees and took out power lines, the sunny days and warm evenings were uncomfortable, but bearable. Everyone gained a renewed appreciation for air conditioning when electric services returned.

This ice storm, sandwiched between snowfalls, and followed by unrelenting cold was more than uncomfortable. It was a serious hazard to anyone without electric power and heat for a prolonged period.

Block Watch captains made an effort to contact participants in their districts, both to ensure everyone was okay and to put out the call for volunteers. Despite the extreme conditions, many participants were seen going door-to-door in their neighborhoods to see if anyone needed help. They provided information, such as access to oxygen and medical equipment at St. Catherine Medical Center, and the availability of warmth and food at the shelters.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, Block Watch members helped city employees prepare and serve meals at both shelters. Some residents spent Wednesday and Thursday nights at the shelters, with security provided by city officials and police officers. By Friday evening only 20 households in Charlestown were still without power and no one needed the shelter services overnight.

The weather event canceled the Thursday night meeting scheduled for Districts 1 and 4, but all meetings are expected to resume in February. Block Watch meetings are held at the Arts and Enrichment Center, 999 Water Street, at 6:30 p.m. on the scheduled evenings.

Districts 1 and 4 hold joint meetings on the last Thursday of each month, with the next meeting scheduled for February 26. There will be a special presentation by the Charlestown Police Department, as they will demonstrate how to look for drug activities in your area. Everyone is invited to attend.

Contacts for District 1 are Steve and Sherri Coyne (256-6163) and Mike and Kay Vaughn (256-0072).

Councilman Dan Roberts (256-6443 or droberts@cityofcharlestown.com) from District 4 spoke of the ice storm events, saying, "I was really proud of the turnout of volunteers from our Block Watch members. To see them checking on each other and helping out; really showed how Block Watch works."

District 2 meets with co-captains Melissa Crawford and George Roberts on the second Monday of each month. After the snow and ice storm, George said, "People in our district checked-in on each other all week. We had a family down on [Hwy] 403 out of power until Thursday so we took them a generator. Having JJ open its doors was helpful to everyone. We appreciated that." District 2's next meeting is March 9, but everyone is invited to attend the February 26 meeting as well. For information, contact Melissa at 256-4851 or George at

256-5807 or via email at georger@cityofcharlestown.com.

District 3 is headed by Councilman Scott McKechnie who can be reached at 256-2279 or smckechnie@cityofcharlestown.com. Scott has decided this month they will join the February 26 meeting with Districts 1 and 4 to benefit from the information being provided by the police department.

Also available with Block Watch information and assistance is Mayor's Assistant Ruthie Jackson at 256-3422 or ruthiej@cityofcharlestown.com.