

# Downtowners are Seeing RED

Ambassador program changes its colors, not its tune

They smile, wave, escort, and clean. Donning cheery purple shirts, jackets and safety packs, the Downtown Ambassadors assist in any way they can. While their motto and mission remain the same, starting October 24 as part of Raleigh Wide Open and the City Plaza Grand Opening, they will shed their purple and khaki uniforms for snazzy red and black ones.

As part of the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, a city and member funded organization that supplements city services in the downtown district, the Ambassadors are entrusted with cleanliness and safety of the city.

"We're the right arm of the city working with downtown," program manager Robert Rutten said. "We're the concierge of the streets."

Rutten explained that the change in uniforms is part of the YouRHere campaign of the Alliance and is an attempt to unify the Ambassadors with all the changes the Alliance is bringing to the downtown area.



The Ambassadors comprise of 22 hourly-paid positions that work shifts between the hours of 6am to 12am daily. They walk and bike the streets and parking garages of the downtown area picking up excess trash, escorting people from their offices to their cars and making sure the areas are free from loiters and troublemakers.

Brenda Carter, a one-year Ambassador veteran and currently the only female on the staff, says she "loves" being an Ambassador.

Carter recalls, "One time, a woman left her car parked in Moore Square while she went to the courthouse, leaving her window down. I could see her valuables

right there so while I was writing her a note, she came running back up. She wrote an email to my boss thanking me for watching out for her."

Beyond their everyday duties of cleanliness and safety, the Ambassador program provides a sense of downtown improvement that businesses, Wake county residents and tourists can see. They also offer directions, food recommendations and the occasional car jump.

"If we can handle it, we will," Rutten said. "If we can't fix it, we will call the right channel."

Lamont Cobb, who has been an

Ambassador for more than a year, says the weather elements are difficult at times.

"It's so hot in the summer and in the winter it's extremely cold," Cobb said. "But I like going home after a day of making people smile and hearing them say 'thank you'. It's nice to know you've helped someone."

Wake county resident and downtown employee Ozie Stallworth believes the Ambassadors are a great asset to the area.

"[The Ambassadors] do an outstanding job representing Raleigh," Stallworth said. "I thank [them] for their efforts."

Rutten insists the list of Ambassador assistance is endless. From graffiti and weed removal to calls for assistance with illegal panhandlers, the Ambassadors help make downtown a safer and cleaner place to work, live and play.

*For more information on the Ambassadors or the Alliance, visit [www.YouRHere.com](http://www.YouRHere.com). To reach the Ambassadors for an escort, assistance or just to say hello or thanks, give them a call at 919.368.7962.*

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