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City of Oak Ridge Neighborhood Watch Newsletter

Inside this issue:

NWP President "Spreading the Word"	2
Photo Enforcement System	2
Neighborhood Watch Success Story	3
A How-to on Neighborhood Watch	4
Crime Prevention Tips	4

Police Department Fighting Crime with Education, Enforcement and Neighborhood Watch Help

Oak Ridge Police Chief David Beams reported to citizens at a recent Crime Prevention Seminar that the Police Department is taking three significant steps to combat crime in Oak Ridge – education, enforcement, and cooperation with Neighborhood Watch groups, Anderson County Sheriff's Office, and District Attorney General David Clark and with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Education includes discussion with pharmacies and financial institutions about crime prevention, and seminars with citizens such as the one held March 10 at the Oak Ridge Civic Center.

The addition of three extra officers in problem areas of the city since mid-February has aided enforcement and resulted in placement of 276 charges from mid-February to early March.

"Having extra staff on the street seven days a week is making a significant difference," Beams said.

Communication with Neighborhood Watch groups helps police know what is going on in the city's neighborhoods, Beams said.

The Police Chief noted that crime is a problem throughout the country and particularly in Tennessee, which has a crime rate that's number 2 in the nation, according to the FBI.

He reported that the total number of crimes in Oak Ridge decreased in 2008 compared with previous years, speaking at the March 10 Crime Prevention Seminar at the Oak Ridge Civic Center. Crimes against persons, including murder and aggravated assault, decreased, while property crimes increased slightly. Burglaries, forgery and credit card fraud are among crimes that have increased.

Total number of crimes decreased from 3,142 in 2007 to 3,116 in 2008, Beams reported. As for total arrests, those increased from 2,437 in 2007 to 2,694 in 2008.



Oak Ridge Police Chief David Beams speaks to those attending the Crime Prevention Seminar.



Residents enjoyed activities at last year's National Night Out in Bissell Park.

Visit the Calendar of Events for information on this year's National Night Out.

Sgt. Newman Offers Crime Prevention Tips for Home and Personal Safety

Oak Ridge Police Sgt. Shannah Newman provided tips for home and personal safety at a March 10 Crime Prevention Seminar sponsored by the Oak Ridge Police Department and Neighborhood Watch.

Newman, Police Chief David Beams, and Crime Prevention Officer Randy Myers each stressed the importance of Neighborhood Watch groups in communicating with police about suspicious or criminal activity in their neighborhoods.

"Having a safe neighborhood isn't a right. It is a responsibility," Newman told about 130 citizens attending the seminar. It is the responsibility of the Police Department, it is the responsibility of City Council, and it is the responsibility of citizens, she said.

"Having a safe neighborhood isn't a right. It is a responsibility."

Help Grow Neighborhood Watch – Spread the Word!

By Ken Senter, President, Neighborhood Watch Program



Check out the Neighborhood Watch Program display at the Oak Ridge Public Library during the month of June.

Congratulations to the citizens of Oak Ridge for coming out in force for the March 10 Crime Prevention Seminar to meet with the leaders of the Oak Ridge Police Department! More than 130 people turned out for a good exchange of information.

Recent events in Oak Ridge, including home invasions, a bank robbery, and arrests of numerous people on drug-related charges have raised awareness, curiosity, and perhaps a bit of fear. The Neighborhood Watch Program is designed to channel those responses into productive cooperation with law enforcement and

with city officials to solve the problems of our city together.

Many people at the meeting expressed interest in starting their own Neighborhood Watch groups, and Officer Randy Myers and the District Leader Board will do all we can to help. With this momentum we really can organize the good citizens of Oak Ridge to reclaim our city and restore the standard of living we all desire

I am a teacher at Oak Ridge High School and will have the summer off. I am setting a goal of having at least half the entire city participating in an

active Neighborhood Watch group by the end of the summer! That would only be a start, but I think that goal can be attained. You can make a difference—spread the word!

Thanks for Supporting Neighborhood Watch Pancake Breakfast

Neighborhood Watch Program hosted its first pancake breakfast May 16 at Applebee's Neighborhood Grill in Oak Ridge. Advance ticket sales helped pack the house for this Neighborhood Watch fund raiser. The breakfast raised funds for signs, literature, other Neighborhood Watch expenses, such as National Night Out and booths at Secret City Festival, and helping new groups get started. Thanks to Applebee's for the restaurant's and staff's generous support for this event.

Oak Ridge High School Football Coach Scott Blade, his wife Sheri and their daughters support the Neighborhood Watch Pancake Breakfast at Applebee's.

(Picture Below)



Ken Senter, Joy Henderson and Jodie Nazaroff volunteered in the kitchen and waited on tables at the Neighborhood Watch Pancake Breakfast at Applebee's.

(Picture Left)



City Begins Using Traffic Photo Enforcement System

Earlier this year, the City of Oak Ridge signed a contract with Redflex for the installation of a traffic photo enforcement system in the City.

The intersection of North Illinois Avenue and Robertsville Road has a photo enforcement system monitoring northbound and southbound traffic. The system detects vehicles that fail to stop for the red light, as well as speeding vehicles.

At the intersection of Oak Ridge Turnpike and Lafayette Drive, the photo enforcement system monitors eastbound and westbound traffic for vehicles that fail to stop for the red light, as well as speeding

vehicles. Additionally, left turns on red from eastbound Oak Ridge Turnpike to northbound New York Avenue and right turns on red from westbound Oak Ridge Turnpike to northbound New York Avenue are monitored. The westbound camera is in a warning period until June 8, 2009, and the eastbound camera's warning period ends June 18, 2009.

Two fixed photo enforcement speed systems are also part of this project and both are located in school zones. One photo enforced speed system is being built on Robertsville Road at Willowbrook School. A second such system will be located on the Oak Ridge Turnpike at

Oak Ridge High School. Both systems will monitor vehicle speeds during school zone times. Prior to and after school zone times, the system will monitor vehicle speeds according to the posted speed limits at their respective locations. Neither system is operational yet and each will have a separate thirty-day warning period.

The goal of this program is to reduce accidents, reduce traffic violations and improve traffic safety by changing driver behavior.

For more information, visit www.cortn.org.

Neighborhood Watch Success Story

What Are You Willing to Do to Get the Result You Want? By Alicia Mitchell, Block Captain

Finding the right help at the right time is the best possible outcome to anybody's problem. For me and my neighbors the right help came at the right time.

I had always noticed the Neighborhood Watch signs in my neighborhood, but had never been approached by anyone from a Neighborhood Watch group for the first 11 years that we lived in Oak Ridge. The reality of my life up to that point was raising three boys from teenagers to men, so I didn't pay much attention to where we had settled.

The Oak Ridge neighborhood was peaceful. Homes were mainly owned by senior citizens, and I'm sure when we moved in they had to get used to the laughter and hard play of three boys.

By 2005, the house next door to us had been sold and the woman who had bought the house married and moved to Knoxville, but before she left, she visited our house and I discovered that her son had survived a shooting years ago in a different city. Just hearing the word "shot" made my eyes "bug out." She went on to say that a girl who lived nearby had driven the get-away car when her son had been shot.

I knew the shooting had to be documented so I printed the news articles, and highlighted areas that described characteristics of what our neighborhood was turning into.

On December 22, 2005, I began taking notes because I noticed strange behavior starting around the fall of 2005. When things happen that are unusual, a person tends to think it's an anomaly and it won't happen again, but this benefit-of-a-doubt soon relinquished into "What is going on?" When there are several cars that do the same thing, and the people getting out of those cars are just as strange physically as they are behaviorally, a person gets the notion that something is not right.

When I made my first call to report

strange behavior, the dispatcher told me to call the drug hot line.

At first I didn't recognize that the behavior we were witnessing was drug behavior, but I got a crash course in it. I documented tag numbers, car descriptions, physical descriptions, events of a screaming girlfriend, excessive dog barking, people walking through our backyard to the house next door, cars congregating in front of our home or at a nearby house. People even pulling their cars up in our *yard*, not driveway, and knocking at our door at 2 a.m., thinking that we were the drug house.

At night my sleep would be abruptly interrupted by multiple car doors closing, loud music "thumping" outside my window, and people walking the sidewalk at night.

I would call the police and talk to the dispatcher. Sometimes when I talked to the dispatcher, I didn't want her to hang up. I just wanted someone to talk to.

By July 2006, my neighborhood had its first Neighborhood Watch meeting.

A friend had given me Neighborhood Watch Coordinator, Sgt. Shannah Newman's phone number and when I first met with her, I showed her a copy of all my notes since December 2005 and laid out my neighborhood for her with index cards.

After I met with Sgt. Newman, I had a direct line to the police department, and I knew things would return to normal around the neighborhood. I learned to identify myself as "Alicia Mitchell, the Neighborhood Watch Block Captain on..." when I called the police station. Once I said Neighborhood Watch, I had the dispatcher's attention.

When I called, police cruisers would drive by or attend to whatever the matter happened to be. Sometimes, police officers would pull their cruisers up in my driveway and watch. The united efforts of Neighborhood Watch, the police force, a new district attorney, and a new mayor chased the drug dealer out of our neighborhood. The drug dealer's

house was foreclosed, bought then renovated, and is now sold to a newlywed couple who works for the City. Much prayer and hard work went in to taking our neighborhood back, and it couldn't have been done without the united front of all of us working together.

A question Shannah had asked at our first meeting: "What are you willing to do to achieve the result that you want?" stays with me. Even though my husband and I worked a combined eighty hours a week, when we were at home we documented what we saw. From December 22, 2005, to July 24, 2006, we had documented 67 eyewitness accounts of car tags, car descriptions and pedestrians visiting the drug house. We even held a Neighborhood Watch barbecue in our front yard, all without saying one word to the violators of our peace and safety. We had also taken digital pictures of the suspicious traffic and e-mailed them Shannah. She collected all of our notes and forwarded them to the narcotics investigators.

Even though we didn't get feedback from the police station, the feedback was made formal when the major and small-time drug dealers left our neighborhood. We got the results we wanted, and although it didn't come in a matter of days, it did come. We just did not give up.

Since our problem was solved, my opinion about drug neighborhoods is that *they* don't need to exist. Drug neighborhoods shouldn't exist when the residents, police force and politicians work together.

Our neighborhood has been rid of drug activity since the major drug dealer left in March 2007, and the small-time dealers were gone around June 2008. Every person deserves a neighborhood that is safe and peaceful, and if your sleep or safety is interrupted on a regular basis, it doesn't have to be that way.

"What are you willing to do to achieve the result that you want?"



Deputy Chief Alan Massengill and Officer Randy Myers join Mayor Pro Tem Jane Miller in recognizing Neighborhood Watch groups at the Neighborhood Watch banquet in January.



How to Start a Neighborhood Watch in Your Neighborhood

- Identify a group of people committed to starting a Neighborhood Watch group.
- List what issues need to be addressed.
- Locate a place to meet: someone’s house; end of the street; church; park; school, etc.
- Invite the Crime Prevention Officer to talk with everyone about safety and security.
- Create a phone list of members.
- Have a sign posted showing that Neighborhood Watch is active in your neighborhood.

Neighborhood Watch Program
City of Oak Ridge Police Department
Contact: Officer Randy Myers

Phone: 865-556-6696

Email: rmyers@cortn.org

Get to Know Your Neighbors!
Get to Know Your Neighborhood!



Secret City Festival
 June 19 & 20
 Bissell Park & Civic Center

11th Annual Lavender Festival
 June 20
 Historic Jackson Square



National Night Out
 August 4, 4-8 p.m.
 Bissell Park

Crime Prevention Tips (cont.)

Continued from Page 1

For the safety of your home, Newman recommended:

- Leaving front and back porch lights on throughout the night. “Believe it or not, light is a deterrent to criminals,” she said. “Criminals are like cockroaches – when you turn the lights on, they scatter.” Costs are minimal, she reported, at \$2 to \$3 a month for a 40 or 60-watt bulb turned on throughout the night.
- Using alarm systems. She said there are things people can do without purchasing an alarm system, and she urged people to remember to set them and turn them off if they are used.
- Installing motion lights. Such lights will cause intruders to jump back into the shadows and serve as deterrents, but leaving porch lights on also serves the same purpose, she said.
- Lock your doors and win-

dows. If you’re working in the yard, lock the door and take the key with you.

- Clean valuable items out of your car. Don’t leave your purse, laptop, camera, cell phone, change, or other items tempting to criminals in your car.

For your personal safety:

- Lock purses in shopping carts with straps attached to carts to hold babies. Many purse snatchings take place in local groceries and large stores, Newman said, because lots of people are around.
- Keep purses closed or zipped to make it harder for a thief to grab your wallet or checkbook.
- Use your purse as a weapon if someone is attacking you.
- Avoid talking on a cell phone when walking to your car in a parking lot or leaving your home. Be

aware of your surroundings.

- Be aware of scams in which someone says you have a flat tire or problem with your car and offers to help. Be cautious and say you are going to call a spouse or friend to help.
- If you have pepper spray, don’t leave a small container on your key chain where you can’t access it. Keep it beside you in the car and carry it with you when you are walking. Test spray it when you first purchase it, to see whether it sprays in a stream or mist.
- For men, if you’re at an event with a crowd, put your wallet in your jacket or in your front pants pocket, somewhere where you will be aware of it. Don’t leave it in the car.
- Copy the items you carry in your wallet so you can report what’s missing in case of theft.

- If you see a suspicious person or vehicle in your neighborhood, for example someone walking through the neighborhood at 2 a.m. and checking car door handles or going up to houses, call the police.
- Pay attention to details about suspicious cars or individuals so you can give police a description.
- If someone comes to your door and asks to use the phone or asks for help, don’t open the door. You could offer to call someone for them, and call 911.

