

Community Safety Committee Update

8/18/06

Based on both the reports to the CSC from homeowners and police reports, there has been a significant amount of criminal activity for our neighborhood for the first half of 2006, with much activity happening in June and July. Crime has ranged from vandalism to thefts from vehicles and garages to attempted break-ins of homes. This CSC Update contains a report of the incidents that have occurred as reported by neighbors as well as a report from the Montgomery County Police Department on Service Calls for the first half of the year for our HOA streets. This update also contains information on how the board, the CSC, and alert neighbors like you are responding to this situation, and how you can help. In addition, the updates include safety tips from the MCPD First District Community Outreach Officer Michael Prather and a description of the Neighborhood Watch Program the CSC is setting up to help make our community less susceptible to crime.

I want to thank all our neighbors who have taken the time to report crime and suspicious activity to both the CSC and the police. You have allowed the CSC to alert the neighborhood to crime very quickly and your actions also influence the MCPD in determining if they need to allocate more resources to our neighborhood.

Shawn Grammer – Community Safety Committee Chair

Summary of Crime

Since June there have been a number of thefts from vehicles and garages and attempted break-ins of homes. Looking at the crimes in aggregate, there isn't much of a pattern. Alleged perpetrators that were confronted or arrested have been teenagers and adults, and in some cases the teenagers were from our community. Crimes have occurred at night and during the day. In many cases, 3-4 incidents have occurred in a single time period. At least one break-in attempt appeared to be by professionals, while others have appeared to be amateurs. There have been at least four specific incidents where a resident surprised a thief or thieves at their home, including two attempted entries through the garage, one attempted entry via the back yard, and one where the thief gained entry to the kitchen.

In addition there was an arrest of 4 teenagers alleged to have stolen a car and driven it to Grinnell Ct. In this case the owner of car saw it driving by with 4 youths, followed the car to Grinnell Ct. and called the police. The police came and made arrests, but because the owner was unable to positively identify the 4 juveniles involved they were released.

Also since June there have been suspicious situations where men in a Fed-Ex truck appeared to be casing the neighborhood late in the evening and knocking on doors, and a more recent incident where 3 teenagers or young men appeared to be casing the neighborhood on foot, with one going around back to get in and the other two waiting out front.

Earlier this year there were several other incidents, including

- a rash of vandalisms of the shared Tot Lot in the Derwood Station II right-of-way
- two man-made fires in the right-of-way by Needwood, one of which scorched over 10 acres

- drug activity, trash dumping by a resident, and pot-shots with pellet guns at Fed-Ex trucks on Hollybrooke Common Property behind the wooden fence between our HOA and the Fed-Ex building
- a pipe-bomb incident in DS2

Calls For Service Statistics for DSS HOA Streets

Officer Prather ran a report of the calls made to the police from January 1st through July 25th, 2006. Note that the calls don't necessarily mean a crime was committed – rather these categories indicate that a call was made about an incident and the incident was categorized as shown below. The results show a total of 53 calls for various crime related incidents. According to Officer Prather, there are still open investigations by a 1st District Investigator on the 5 burglaries.

Category	Jan1-Jul25 2006	Jan1-Jul25 2005
Missing Person	1	
Suspicious Situations	8	8
Miscellaneous	7	15
Assaults		1
Aggravated Assault		1
Burglaries	5	1
Follow – up Investigations	3	20
Thefts		5
Thefts from Autos (under \$50)	2	
Domestic Disputes	8	3
Disorderly Conduct	8	2
Residential Alarms	5	4
Vandalisms	3	14
Runaway	1	
Animal Complaint	1	
Recovered Property	1	
Forgery – Counterfeiting Identity Theft	1	
Police Informational Report	1	
Parking Offenses		1
Trash Dumping		1
Commercial Alarm		1
Mental Illness		1

WHAT THE COMMUNITY IS DOING ABOUT CRIME AND VANDALISM

The Community Safety Committee and the Board have taken several steps, and you are an integral part of making these steps successful.

1) Started the Hollybrooke Email Alert List to rapidly notify the neighborhood of serious incidents when they happen. To date we have about 120 valid email addresses covering both our DSS HOA and the DS2 HOA. You can be added to the alert list by contacting the CSC chair at communitysafety@hollybrooke.org.

2) Continuing a dialogue with the MCPD. For example, Officer Prather ran the Calls for Service report shown above, and has provided information on setting up the Neighborhood Watch,

including patrols. He will also provide training. In addition, the CSC has an ongoing dialogue with the MCPD 1st District Commander, Deputy Commander, those investigating crimes in our neighborhood, and the crime analyst.

3) Approved the Neighborhood Watch program, to include patrols, at the July meeting. We'll be setting up training and the patrols in the coming month.

These actions are aimed at neighborhood organization, street presence, reporting of crimes and suspicious activity, and police cooperation, with the aim of making the neighborhood less friendly to criminal activity.

WHAT YOU AS A HOMEOWNER CAN DO

Officer Prather provides several tips below for securing your home and what to do when going on vacation. In addition, all HOA members are encouraged to participate the Email Alert List, in patrols, and other aspects of the Neighborhood Watch program. Together we can make a difference in our neighborhood. To learn more about the email list, how to report incidents, and to participate in the Neighborhood Watch program, please see the the Hollybrooke Website, <http://www.hollybrooke.org> or contact the CSC at communitysafety@hollybrooke.org .

Finally, if you have tweens or teenagers, it is imperative that you be aware of their activities and discuss with them the possible consequences of their actions and those of their peers. Remember, not only are the perpetrators criminally liable, but as parents, you may be liable for damages.

All of the vandalism, most of the less serious crime, and several of the serious crimes are attributed to youths. In several cases, the crime is attributed to teenagers in this neighborhood. In one case, a cell phone stolen out of a car in a garage early one morning was used to call three other residences in the neighborhood by 8 am. In a case of vandalism and a different case of an attempted burglary, evidence indicates that the perpetrators are teens in our neighborhood who know the people they are victimizing. In all of these cases, it is likely that a peer may have knowledge that one of their friends has been involved in a crime. If they were to relay their knowledge of such incidents to you or us at the CSC it could have an impact on crime in our neighborhood.

SAFETY TIPS FROM OFFICER PRATHER

Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:

Home Safety

- Always keep doors and windows locked when away from your house.
- Close the garage door when working in the back yard.
- Make sure the garage door is closed over night.
- Your house should be well lit. It is a good idea to use automatic timers for the outdoor and indoor lights.
- Motion sensors can be used also.

Vacation Tips

- Have a trusted neighbor check on you house periodically and provide them with the following:

- Date and time you are leaving.
- Date and time of expected return.
- How and where you can be reached in an emergency.
- Ask a neighborhood to park their car your drive way.
- Arrange to have grass cut, mail and news papers picked up.
- Keep all tools and ladders out of sight

Neighborhood Safety

- Report any and all suspicious activities to Montgomery County Police, (non-emergency number 301-279-8000/ emergency number 911).
- Talk to the young adults about the danger of under age drinking. Also talk to them about the risks of late night swimming in pools that are closed.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Prather
1st District Community Services Officer
Montgomery County Department of Police