

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
January 13, 2012

Lt. Kevin Ouellet asked me to pass along a request on behalf of the police department to readers who may have photos or Amesbury Police Department memorabilia. In an attempt to recognize the contributions of former police officers who served our community, he and Chief Gagnon are in the process of creating a display in the former courtroom at the Police Station. The Police Service in our community dates back to the 1800s and certainly family members of former officers and residents have accumulated photos, equipment, badges or other memorabilia. Chief Gagnon and Lt. Ouellet are seeking items for the display, such as items that may have been tucked away in a closet or the attic. They are also looking for photos of Amesbury officers, either as donations or to make copies of. If you have any items, please contact either Lt. Ouellet via e-mail at kevino@amesburyma.gov or me, thomash@amesburyma.gov or by calling the Police Station, 978-388-1217. It's hoped a display can be created as a tribute to the people who have helped protect and serve our community through the years.

It's likely over the past few months; you've been able to check out "The Crime Lines" in *The Amesbury News*. The "Crime Lines" is a version of the in-house Crime Bulletin I assemble each week for officers to review. This summary of activity helps to familiarize them with past incidents, ongoing domestic situations, crime patterns and other notable happenings. Typically, my Crime Bulletin is more detailed, about 3 pages long, with specific names and addresses, more than what you see in Crime Lines. In order to protect victims, ensure privacy and not jeopardize any investigations, the material published in *The Amesbury News* is more general.

Crime Lines should give readers an idea, however, about some of the activity going on in our community on a regular basis. In fact, if you have read the column regularly, it's likely you've noticed the same patterns we see and that crime can happen in any neighborhood. Anytime I discuss crime data, I immediately start the conversation with the fact we live in a very safe city. I am quick to follow, however, with the fact we are not immune from the troubles of today's society. Compared to larger cities, we are very fortunate but there are drugs, serious crimes, domestic issues and much more happening here every day. Crime prevention, investigation, detection and traffic enforcement comprise only a portion of the duties of police officers today. As cuts are made in other social service areas, the responsibility to deal with many health and social issues has been shifted to police departments.

I thought I'd conclude this week's column with some explanation of the terms you may have seen once or twice in Crime Lines. Just a reminder, much of what goes on is not published in the column but I do hope to include more in the upcoming months, such as traffic crash locations. I understand readers would prefer to see more accurate addresses but hope you understand the sensitivity of many of these incidents. Here are a few and I'll include a few more in the upcoming weeks.

A "LARCENY" is a theft of property, such as credit card misuse, shoplifting or a theft from a residence.

A "BURGLARY" means someone entered a building or car without permission and stole property.

“VANDALISM” typically refers to an incident where something was damaged, defaced or destroyed, sometimes random and sometimes targeted.

It’s likely you have noticed the significant number of domestics police respond to during the course of a week. “DOMESTICS” can be verbal or physical and involve a variety of relationships; sometimes resulting in criminal charges. A “DISTURBANCE” is typically a noise complaint, such as loud music, a party or activity at an unreasonable hour. In some cases, a disturbance actually is found to be a domestic situation. Disturbances can also be disagreements between neighbors or an active fight.

“SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY” calls can involve people, sounds, motor vehicles or a number of other situations. We actually encourage people to call police when they notice something out of the ordinary. On Christmas Eve Day, an alert resident contacted police after seeing two youths exit a truck on Arlington St at an unusual hour. This call helped lead to the arrests of two youths suspected in a holiday crime spree.

Police in Amesbury and every community respond and deal with a variety of issues and calls, which makes the job interesting and sometimes challenging. One of our goals is to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime within the community. I’d like to thank the Amesbury News once again for helping to inform residents about some of the social issues and crimes affecting our community. Sometimes people don’t see what happens and assume nothing is, well, after 25 years of full time service I can assure you there’s plenty happening in Amesbury.