

**Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw**  
**September 14, 2012**

One of the greatest challenges of a community crime prevention program is to explain why the effort is necessary, especially in a small City like ours. Most residents do not become victims of a crime and many are not aware of the activity locally. Everyone, however, does hear or read of a story every so often, which brings about a genuine concern. Our society certainly has a number of problems and our community sometimes becomes exposed to those dangers. We are fortunate to live in a very safe City but are by no means immune from the crimes affecting society.

Although not every crime can be prevented, residents can take steps to reduce the chances of becoming a victim of crime. Sometimes those steps also reduce crime throughout the community, thus reducing fear and the costs associated with the activity. For example, sometimes people assume shoplifting only affects the store owner but in reality, their losses are passed along to all consumers. Vandalism may deface the walls of particular businesses but the insurance costs are passed along to the entire community too. So even though you may not be directly affected by a specific incident, you are ultimately affected by the associated costs.

More important than the actual compilation of statistics is the perception of fear within a community. If people are afraid, they won't visit, shop or live in a community, hence the reason why crime prevention and community partnership efforts are crucial today. Police agencies cannot do the job alone; in fact, everyone has a responsibility to do their part. Resources are limited, so communities must utilize those resources wisely. It's likely you have noticed mountain bike patrols in the downtown area, as well as officers on motorcycles throughout the community. Using these less traditional patrols brings the officer closer to the community. In speaking with residents, many share the memory of the days when an officer walked the beat in the downtown. At that time, such a patrol was very effective because of the activity around the downtown. Today, our City is spread out a bit more and calls for service come from every corner. In order to better accommodate those requests, it makes sense to have a more mobile means of response. Not that you'll never see an officer walking the beat downtown but a mountain bike patrol is able to cover the downtown, Riverwalk, Transportation Center area, Lake Garnder Beach, Friend Street Park, Schools and many neighborhoods.

Working with community members helps to address neighborhood concerns, provide security, heighten awareness of incidents and trends and offer tips to make life safer for all. In Amesbury, police work with various parts of the community, including the Chamber of Commerce, Council on Aging, School Department, Mayor's Office and Public Works Department, to make our city a safer and better place. We also work with agencies and groups like Our Neighbor's Table, Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, Pettingill House, American Cancer Society and Grad Night, to address social issues and safety programs. We appreciate the support and assistance these partners provide, they are a valuable resource to our community.

As part of those community partnerships, on Saturday September 29<sup>th</sup>, the DEA and Amesbury PD will be collecting prescription and over-the-counter medications that are expired or of no use to residents. The collection will take place between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM in the

Parking Lot between the Police Station and Town Hall. There is no charge for this service and all collected items will be transferred to the DEA for proper destruction. Acceptable items include pills, tablets, liquids, powders and inhalers; needles, medical instruments such as thermometers and IV drugs cannot be accepted. For any questions, please contact me at the Police Station, [thomash@amesburyma.gov](mailto:thomash@amesburyma.gov) or 978-388-1217. The following day, Sunday September 30<sup>th</sup>, the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center will be holding their annual Walk Against Violence in Newburyport. Several of us from the Police Department will be walking in support of the Crisis Center.

Finally, each year about this time I begin fielding questions about “Trick or Treat.” “Trick or Treat” will be observed in Amesbury on Wednesday October 31<sup>st</sup>, from the hours of 5:30 to 7:30 PM. A few years ago, most area police departments decided to keep the tradition on the same date each year to eliminate the confusion associated with changing it. So if you have begun making your fall plans already, add October 31<sup>st</sup> to your calendar.