

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
October 5, 2012

The month of October is designated as the “month” for a number of great causes; including breast cancer awareness, fire prevention, domestic violence prevention and crime prevention. In Amesbury, we kicked off a new anti-bullying initiative at each public school on Monday to begin Crime Prevention Month. Students gathered at each school and invited to “Be a Buddy, Not a Bully.” They received a bright red wrist band, some safety tips and the commitment from several community partners who want to make Amesbury a safer City. The program was the vision of Mrs. Rosemary Werner and has been adopted by communities throughout the area. I thought I’d provide some information for parents in this week’s Watchwords, so they can help to address the problem too.

Some of the warning signs of bullying include; withdrawal, avoidance of school activities, a loss of friends, a drop in grades and even torn clothing or bruises. A child who frequently needs extra money or additional school supplies may be a victim of a bully. The problem is not exclusive to boys either, in fact, it may actually be worse among girls. Realizing that something is going on with your son or daughter is an important first step in addressing the problem. Although it’s easier said than done; you must establish good and open communication with your children at any early age. The problems they need help with at the Elementary School level will only get worse as they get older.

One may ask, “what is bullying” and there is no simple answer. Bullying often involves a number of behaviors directed towards the victim. A bully may damage property, push their victim around physically, taunt the victim with name calling or false claims and exclude them from group activities. Although everyone looks different on the outside, everyone is basically the same on the inside so those words and actions are certainly hurtful. Bullying is not limited to children either; there are plenty of adult bullies. There has been a steady increase in workplace violence as well as issues between neighbors and even senior citizens. Too often the violence escalates and someone gets hurt. Workplace bullying or harassment includes excluding someone from a group, belittling someone in public, use of demeaning language, taunting, spreading lies and inappropriate touching.

Dealing with a bully and resolving the problem is not always easy; in fact, the situation can be extremely upsetting and frustrating. Children need to know that help is available, encourage them to speak with a teacher or school administrator. Provide the child with positive feedback to build their self-esteem. Teach them to resolve matters without using violence and encourage them to help other students who are bullied. They should never condone bullying by laughing at a bully’s actions as this only makes matters worse.

It’s a bit more difficult for adults but the steps are similar; talk with someone about the problem, keep a written record of the incidents, don’t react to the behavior and don’t be afraid to tell the bully to stop. Don’t argue with the bully as you could get blamed for a fight or something not true. Report the situation to your supervisor and don’t feel embarrassed, you are probably not alone. Seek advice from your supervisor and avoid being alone with the bully. Don’t underestimate the potential of workplace violence as the problem has become a serious issue.

As part of Crime Prevention month, the Amesbury Police Department and Governor's Auto Theft Strike Task Force will be conducting an Auto Etching Day on Saturday October 13th, from 9:00 AM until 2:00 PM at the Police Station on School Street. Vehicle owners will be able to have the vehicle identification number chemically etched on all windows. This process helps make vehicle parts less attractive to car thieves and can save you about 15% on the comprehensive part of your car insurance. There is a \$10 fee (cash only), which helps defray some of the State's expenses. The application only takes a few moments to complete and no appointment is necessary. The event will be held, rain or shine, but may take a bit longer if raining as the glass surfaces must be dried before the chemical is applied. If you need more information, please e mail me at thomash@amesburyma.gov or call 978-388-1217.

Finally, TRICK or TREAT is Wednesday October 31st, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM in Amesbury; make a note on the calendar and watch for safety tips here soon.