

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
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Anyone who has become a victim of a home burglary will tell you it's one of the worst experiences imaginable. Knowing a stranger entered your home, went through your property and stole personal items is disturbing. It's even worse when the victim is home during the crime, as it's certainly a terrifying ordeal. On average, police in Amesbury investigate a dozen or so home entries annually; but this year, we've seen an increase. Although some may quickly blame the increase on the state of the economy; the truth is that most property crimes are drug related, as addicts seek money to support their problem. They have no regard for family heirlooms or personal effects, seeking only something to pawn for a few dollars.

One of the challenges we have in addressing this problem is the fact many neighborhoods are empty during the daytime. Too often, criminals are able to get in and out without being seen. In some cases they leave behind physical evidence but obtaining prints or other evidence can be difficult. As a resident, no neighborhood is immune from crime, so everyone should take a few precautions. You may not be able to completely "burglar-proof" your home but you surely can reduce the odds you'll become a victim.

The number one way to deter a burglary, always lock your doors and windows. Gone are those days when you could leave a home unattended. There are just too many people looking for an opportunity. Some burglars will even go door-to-door, checking for one that's unlocked. Here are a few more tips to consider, which may help you avoid that sickening feeling of discovering you've become a victim of a burglary.

- Install good locks on doors and windows and use them
- If you have an alarm, use it.
- Ask someone to gather mail and newspapers when you are away
- Keep shrubbery trimmed away from the windows
- Use lights, especially since it's darker at an earlier hour
- Keep ladders out of reach
- Avoid leaving a garage door open if unattended
- Beware of solicitors and never allow a stranger into your home.
- Encourage neighbors to report suspicious activity and
- Photograph your property, just in case it's stolen.

The National Crime Prevention Council reports there's a burglary once every fifteen seconds, most often between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM, with an average loss valued over \$2000. The most common items stolen in Amesbury include jewelry, lose money, electronic equipment and tools. Home insurance may cover a portion of the loss but you must assume the rest.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped support our Coaches Vs. Cancer Game last Friday night at Landry Stadium. The players, cheerleaders and many fans sported pink as the Indians rolled to a big victory over the Winthrop Vikings. This was a great opportunity to help tackle cancer and score a touchdown against this terrible disease. In fact, thanks to some generous donations and the sale of purple "Relay" footballs with pink ribbons, we donated over \$500 to

The American Cancer Society! I would especially like to thank High School students, Carolina Merrill, Lucas Townsend, MacKenzie Richard and Curran O'Connor for helping to make this effort possible. Our community is fortunate to have so many young people who are working to make our city a better place. Too often we hear of the negative things young people do but in fact, the positive things far outnumber the bad. I would also like to thank Football Coach Thom Connors and Cheerleader Coach Maureen Boody for their help. Generous donations from the Amesbury Health Care Charitable Trust and Amesbury Youth Funding helped purchase the pink socks and footballs also.

In closing, I would like to recognize the efforts of Ms. Pat Blonda and the Heritage Towers & Vale Community! A couple weeks ago, Pat heard I'd be selling footballs for the American Cancer Society at the Indians' game. She called me and said, "we need footballs!" I brought 25 of them to her and she called later that day, looking for more because she sold out. In no time, she sold even more and raised a lot of money for ACS. This is the kind of teamwork our community does on a regular basis to help those in need and the kind of effort that will defeat cancer. Once again, thanks to everyone who made this effort possible and a success.