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Residents can take steps to deter crime, says Lafayette Police Chief

By Pippa Fisher

Crime tends to go in waves and Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen said that despite the perception that burglaries are up, in fact so far this year, residential burglaries in Lafayette are down from the same period last year.

That was one of the messages Lafayette's top cop told several Lafayette residents who recently braved the stormy elements and turned out for an informal style meeting to hear Christensen update them on the latest crime trends within the community.

Furthermore, Christensen made the point that of the seven residential burglaries so far in Lafayette, all seven have been solved. He attributes this in part to their practice of collecting DNA at every crime scene to build a database, which he says is far superior to fingerprinting. He said that most criminals who have reached the level of attempting residential burglary are repeat offenders.

City-installed cameras have made catching criminals as they attempt to flee much easier, Christensen said. He believes in keeping crime out of his city by being hard on those who attempt it here. He pointed out, "You will never correct the behavior but you can affect where they shop." As a result of stiff penalties, he hopes to get word out through the criminal community that Lafayette is tough on crime.

His style is friendly and approachable but he wants to get his message across: that residents can take steps to help make themselves less of a target.

He stressed the importance of simply locking doors and windows. He said that five of the seven break-ins so far this year involved unlocked doors or windows. The same applies to side gates. He said most criminals enter through a back door or window.

Christensen said that an alarm - the louder the better - is a good investment and that residents should advertise that they have one with stickers visible from outside. As another form of alarm, he said, a dog makes an excellent deterrent.

Cameras, both externally and internally, have allowed police to solve many recent crimes and he thoroughly encouraged their use.

He was particularly clear on one point - that residents should avoid confronting a criminal.

The chief suggested that if residents will be away, they should not cancel their newspapers to avoid getting on a "vacation list" which can fall into the wrong hands. It is better to tell neighbors, who can then keep an eye on the house.

Lastly, he reminded all present that the Lafayette police offer an additional service of checking in on vacationing residents' homes.

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