



FEBRUARY 2022 - NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

By Sherry Le, HOA Neighborhood Watch Chair

WHO'S IN YOUR HOUSE?

Recently one of your Tellico Village neighbors was a victim of theft - I want to share the generic version of the story as an eye opener to everyone.

Mr. Neighbor kept a couple of firearms in his nightstand drawer. Since the grandkids were coming for the holidays, he thought it would be safer to move those guns to an area of the closet out of reach. Grandkids came and went and in the days following Mr. Neighbor had a service repair person out to his home. Just so happens that service repair person had to access the master closet to complete the repair. (You all know where this story is going...) Sometime later, Mr. Neighbor remembered "Oh, I should put my guns back in my nightstand since the grandkids are gone now..." However, the handguns were nowhere to be found in the master closet.

Let's talk about this - how many times do you allow someone in your home to do something and they have free reign in and out of rooms unaccompanied while you sit in the living room or kitchen and just wait for them to finish? How many of you leave a wallet or jewelry sitting out on your dressers, countertops, keys near the door, etc.? How easy would it be for anyone to swipe something and put it in their pocket or tool bag that they carry from room to room.

Tips you should do when you have people in your home:

1. Always verify the identification of the service people to make sure they are who they are. If you do not feel comfortable with the person that shows up at your door, you do not have to let them in.
2. When you have an upcoming appointment, clear the areas that they will be accessing of your personal belongings, especially things of value.
3. Never allow someone to roam unaccompanied throughout your home. Yes, you might feel awkward following them around, but if you do, they will be less likely or tempted to take something they see. I'm not saying you have to crawl in the attic with them - unless of course you keep your valuables in the attic??
4. Always try to use reputable and insured companies who vet their employees. Not that this always helps but there are scammers out there that pose as companies with no intent of ever coming back to do the job. They just might be casing out your home for a future theft.

Going back to Mr. Neighbors story. A Deputy from the Sheriff's Department came out and completed an investigation and report for the detectives to follow up with. Can you go back to the hired company and accuse the service person of the theft without actually seeing it happen? You can ask...but what do you think they are going to say?

Some preventive measures you can take and things you should already have done:

1. Do not leave valuables including firearms, cash, jewelry in areas accessible to guests. These types of things should be hidden in places only known to you and your household. Larger heavy safes are pretty hard for someone to just walk away with.
2. Always document serial numbers, especially of firearms. Stolen guns can be entered in a National stolen firearms database and if they are ever used in a crime, it will not come back to you. A serial number on any item is a sure way for law enforcement to identify recovered property and return it to its rightful owner.
3. Take photographs of valuables in your home like artwork, jewelry, collections - this way you have documentation for identifying property if it is stolen or later recovered.
4. Have your property evaluated by a professional for documentation and keep that separate so you have what you need to file claims with insurance companies later.

Tellico Village is a wonderful place to live. We need to keep an eye out for each other and make sure we keep our community a safe place to live. I encourage everyone to talk about these subjects with your neighbors. Get the word out and we might just save the next Mr. Neighbor from the heartache.