

**Minutes for
Forest Lakes Neighborhood Watch Block Captain Meeting
November 15, 2006
6:30pm to 8:00pm at the North Pool Clubhouse**

David Shifflett, the Forest Lakes Director for Security, opened the meeting by introducing Diana Edwards, the Community Relations Coordinator, and Sergeant Peter Mainzer, both of the Albemarle County Police Department

Diana Edwards summarized the crime statistics for Forest Lakes for November 14th, 2005 through November 14, 2006.

- Although Forest Lakes is the largest community in Albemarle County, with 42 individual neighborhoods, it has the lowest crime rate of any community in Albemarle County.
- In Forest Lakes South there were eleven reports of larceny (including those that occurred at the schools), seventeen reports of vandalism, and one account of Breaking and Entering. No patterns were found and all were considered minor criminal acts.
- In Forest Lakes North there were two reports of larceny and three reports of vandalism.

Sergeant Peter Mainzer of the Albemarle County Police Department discussed the crimes committed in Forest Lakes. Many of the crimes committed in Forest Lakes during this past year were preventable (home/car doors or windows had been left unlocked).

Sergeant Mainzer described the most common kinds of burglaries.

- Almost all car thefts occur at night when it is dark outside.
- Almost all home burglaries occur during the daytime while most people are at work.
- Single family homes are burglarized most often, as compared to multiple family units, because there is less chance of detection.
- Burglars avoid homes with dogs, alarm systems, and vehicles parked outside or in the garage.
- Burglars often enter through a back door or window, which often times has been left unlocked.
- Some burglars even knock first and then, if someone answers, they make up a story and leave.

Sergeant Mainzer shared tips for crime prevention and holiday safety:

- Lock your windows and doors
- Don't leave items and valuables in plain view
- Use outdoor lighting effectively
- Call the police to request a House Check while you are away on vacation (it is not guaranteed since officers do these when they have down time)

Sergeant Mainzer described the limited number of officers (115 total) serving Albemarle County, but he made it clear that this should not deter anyone from calling 911 for emergencies/non-emergencies. Crime prevention, beginning with Neighborhood Watch Programs such as Forest Lakes', can help lower the demand placed on officers, helping them prioritize and respond more efficiently.

Those present discussed reasons why Forest Lakes' crime rates are so low.

- Sergeant Mainzer explained how Common Area Maintenance keeps Forest Lakes tidy, clean, and well-kept; attributes which deter crime. The high number of joggers, walkers, and residents using the outdoor facilities also help deter crime in Forest Lakes.
- David Shifflett explained how Forest Lakes has occasionally paid for supplemental police patrols of our community.
- David Shifflett explained how Forest Lakes design, a One-Way-In and One-Way-Out Cul-De-Sac design, was once favored by Albemarle County and may have a lot to do with our low crime rates. Sergeant Mainzer described Forest Lakes' design as an example of "Crime prevention through environmental design". Those present discussed whether the proposed connector routes would significantly increase crime rates in Forest Lakes.

Those present discussed improvement that could be made:

- We need Neighborhood Watch signs throughout Forest Lakes, but particularly in Forest Lakes South. The placement of the signs would require coordination with VDOT and the cost of the signs poses another issue. Those interested in helping with this effort should contact David Shifflett. Ideas are welcome.
- In addition to signs, Neighborhood Watch window stickers could also be helpful. Diana Edwards is looking into window stickers.
- Diana Edwards will email David Shifflett information describing the National Night Out.
- Sergeant Mainzer asks that we watch the Albemarle County Police Department website. Improvements will soon include features such as a way to search by neighborhood for a list of the crimes reported, print public reports, etc.
- Separate crime rate statistics for Springridge were requested. Springridge was included in the Forest Lakes South crime rate totals. If necessary, Diana Edwards can make separate statistics for Springridge available by emailing them to Dave Shifflett.
- The Charlottesville Emergency Response Team (CERT) may be a group of interest to the Forest Lakes Neighborhood Watch Problem. Together the two groups could help raise awareness and preparedness within our Forest Lakes community in the event of a large-scale emergency.

Diana Edwards suggested that Neighborhood Watch programs hold three meetings each year:

- One Neighborhood Watch Annual Meeting to discuss crime statistics and prevention
- One Neighborhood Watch Social to raise interest and awareness (for all residents)
- One Block Social organized within each neighborhood block, at which training on an issue such as "internet safety" or "identity theft" could be provided. Contact Diana Edwards if interested in setting up a Block Social presentation.

Diana Edwards provided handouts on:

- The Members of a Neighborhood Watch Program and their Responsibilities
- The Albemarle County Police Department's Neighborhood Watch Program
- Chatting Online and Child Safety

Thank you to David Shifflett, Diana Edwards, Sergeant Mainzer, all our Block Captains, and all our Resident Members. Thank you also for the refreshments at tonight's meeting.