

## Mayor's Column

June 26, 2017

This week's column is season specific as the school year has come to a close and many Villagers begin to prepare for summer vacations.

With residents traveling for extended periods of time, it is important that one's home looks occupied. Even when mail is stopped, Pennysavers and phone books left in the driveway are a telltale sign of an empty house. Our police department advises you to tell a neighbor of your schedule, ask them to pick up items left at your home and encourage them to occasionally park in your driveway. In addition, alert our police desk of your travels and they will add your home to the "dark house" list and have an officer go by on a daily basis.

Other safety tips from our police department for home security while traveling include

- Putting timers on TVs and radios as well as lights so the house appears occupied.
- Phone ringers, especially in apartments, should be lowered as an audible persistently ringing phone is a sign of an empty apartment.
- Even when home, cars should always be locked and valuables removed from plain site. The vast majority of our car thefts are not break-ins, rather crimes of opportunity when unlocked car doors are tried, opened and GPS, money and valuables taken.
- If upon return to your home you think something has been disturbed, do not enter your residence, rather dial 911 from the street or a neighbor's home. If you enter your home, the intruder could still be inside and/or you might touch items and destroy anything of evidentiary value.

Our Police Department offers many safety services that add to the peace and security of Village life.

As example:

- Residents can leave a house or apartment key at the Police Department where it will be stored in a secure and locked cabinet. It can be signed out for something as mundane as a lock out to being used by police and fire for emergency service. As illustration, just last week, a 90 year old plus resident

fell during the night and could not reach the door. Because we had her key on file, the police did not have to smash in her door or call a relative or the super, and were able to get her medical aid immediately.

- Our police will also do a security evaluation of residences, advising on door and window locks, whether more lighting is needed or if trees and hedges should be trimmed to enhance visibility.

Of late, the criminal pursuits in the Village are now quite often being engineered through phone scams. The following have occurred repeatedly in the past few months:

You receive a phone call from the representative helping your grandchild who has gotten in some sort of trouble and doesn't want his parents to know but needs money for immediate representation, bail or traffic fines. The caller instructs grandparents to FedEx the money or buy a pre-paid debit card and sent to a certain address ASAP. The perpetrator has researched the child in question through social media so information as to name, college, vacation destination is so accurate, it is quite believable.

The same MO is used to solicit funds for the relative who was "robbed" while on their current vacation.

On a variation of the same theme, callers representing our utilities call to say service will be cut off unless a prepaid debit card (easy to purchase throughout the Village usually as a Visa or the "Green Dot" company's card), is purchased and then the code transmitted back to them by phone; the code being as good as cash. In point of fact, no legitimate utility will ever ask you for money by phone. It is so insidiously clever because your power stays on, you believe your previously mailed check may have been lost in the mail and it is only during the next billing cycle that you realize you essentially double paid.

For many people the most unnerving call is the one from the "I.R.S." demanding a party under penalty of an arrest warrant. Again, the IRS never discusses tax deficiencies by phone. Inquiries are also handled only with a hard copy letter.

As point of fact, our Bronxville Police Department or its Police Benevolent Association also never requests donations by phone. No money solicited from any organization representing to act on our police force's behalf ever reaches our department.

The “latest” in scams is via the package delivery system. An individual will order an item, often laptops and iPhones with a stolen credit card and have it delivered to random addresses, often vacant homes up for sale. They then track the package and collect at the empty house. In several cases a resident homeowner has received a wrong package, gets a call from the fraudulent recipient, who then comes by to retrieve it from a front step or porch. If this occurs or even if you see packages sitting too long at a neighbors, call the Police Desk immediately and they will review/confiscate the package.

As the police chief often shares with me, most crimes in the Village are simply ones of opportunity and even a small ounce of prevention can dissuade a would be perpetrator.