NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWS

Volume 15, Issue 5 West Valley Senior Lead Office (818) 374-7630 May 2011
Sergeant Randy Hoffmaster - Sergeant Frank Avila

Weapons in the Home

When we talk about violence, we can't ignore weapons. Nine out of ten murders involve a weapon - eight of ten involve a firearm. Most robberies involve the use of a weapon, most frequently a handgun.

One in seven teens has reported carrying a weapon - like a bat, club, gun, or knife - at some time to protect himself. Weapons can make violence more deadly and less personal. A gun in the home increases the likelihood of homicide three times and the likelihood of suicide five times.

Most fatal firearm accidents and suicides occur when children and teens discover firearms at home that have been left loaded or unsecured. Because of the serious risk of firearm-related death and injury to children and teenagers, experts on all sides of the gun debate agree that the decision to keep a firearm in the home is very serious and one that must not be made lightly.

Reduce the Risk

Think long and hard about having weapons, especially firearms, in your home. Studies show that a firearm in the home is more than forty times as likely to hurt or kill a family member as to stop a crime.

Look at other ways to protect yourself and your home. Invest in top-grade locks, jamming devices for doors and windows, a dog, or an alarm system. Start or join a Neighborhood Watch. Check with the police, the YMCA/YWCA, or the recreation department about a self-defense class.

If you do choose to own firearms - handguns, rifles, or shotguns - make sure they are safely stored. That means unloaded, trigger-locked, and in a locked gun case or pistol box, with ammunition separately locked. Store keys out of reach of children, away from weapons and ammunition. Check frequently to make sure this storage remains secure.

Obtain training from a certified instructor in firearms safety for everyone in the home. Make sure it's kept current.

Teach your children what to do if they find a firearm or something that might be a weapon –

Stop, Don't Touch, Get Away, and Tell a Trusted Adult!

ENCINO:

Senior Lead Officer Robert Trulik **Office (818) 374-7637**
32325@lapd.lacity.org **Cell (818) 731-2572**

Contact Officer Trulik for information on the next Encino Neighborhood Watch Meeting.

Stop Violence

Show children how to settle arguments or solve problems without using words or actions that hurt others. Set the example by the way you handle everyday conflicts in the family, at work, and in the neighborhood. Don't forget that common courtesies like "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" help ease tensions that can lead to violence.

Discourage name-calling and teasing. These can easily get out of hand, moving all too quickly from "just words" to fists, knives, and even firearms. Teach children that bullying is wrong and take their fears about bullies seriously.

Take a hard look at what you, your family, and your friends watch and listen to for entertainment - from action movies and cop shows to video games and music lyrics. How do the characters solve problems? Do they make firearms and other violence appear exciting, funny, or glamorous? Are the real-life consequences of violence for victims and families clear? Talk about what each of you liked and didn't like.

Stick with friends and family who steer clear of violence and drugs. And encourage your children to do the same. Research shows use of alcohol and other drugs is closely linked with violence, including the use of guns and other weapons.

Learn your state and local laws on firearms. Insist that these laws be enforced vigorously but fairly. Support police, prosecutors, judges, and other local officials who enforce laws designed to prevent gun violence.

LAKE BALBOA:

Senior Lead Officer David Ham **Office (818) 374-7634**
25717@lapd.lacity.org **Cell (818) 731-2551**

Senior Lead Officer Saul Paredes **Office (818) 374-7635**
35275@lapd.lacity.org **Cell (818) 731-2554**

Contact Officer Ham or Paredes for information on the next Lake Balboa Neighborhood Watch Meetings.

RESEDA:

Senior Lead Officer Royal Barber **Office (818) 374-7629**
33970@lapd.lacity.org **Cell (818) 731-2580**

Senior Lead Officer Isela Parra **Office (818) 374-7631**
34488@lapd.lacity.org **Cell (818) 731-2574**

Next Neighborhood Watch Meetings – Thursday, May 12 and Thursday, June 9 – 7:00 p.m.
Ann Kinzle Community Room located in the L.A.P.D. West Valley Area Station

Take Action in Your Community

Be sure you know where and how to report potentially violent situations or concerns about conditions in the neighborhood that could lead to violence. Ask your police department for help in identifying what to report, when, to whom, and how.

Consider organizing an event that lets people turn in weapons, or even objects that might be mistaken for real weapons, in exchange for books, coupons from local merchants, toys, or simply the satisfaction of making the community safer.

Support schools and youth clubs in their efforts to keep guns, knives, and other weapons from menacing the everyday lives of children and teens. Encourage children to report any weapons they know about in or near school to staff or the police.

Utilize Resources

Look around to see what happens to young people after school hours. Are there supervised programs for younger children? Opportunities for teens and preteens to work with children, get or give help with homework, tackle neighborhood problems, or learn art, music, sports, or computer skills? In many areas, after-school programs are located in schools themselves and called Safe Havens or Beacon Schools.

Start a discussion of neighborhood views on weapons in the home, children playing with toy weapons, children and violent entertainment, and how arguments should be settled.

A PTA meeting, an informal social gathering, or a Neighborhood Watch meeting could provide the opportunity.

TARZANA:

Senior Lead Officer Daryl Scoggins **Office (818) 374-7632**
35828@lapd.lacity.org **Cell (818) 731-2573**

Contact Officer Scoggins for information on the next Tarzana Neighborhood Watch Meeting.

Some Tips for Talking to Your Kids

Young children: Experts advise parents to reassure children that, as parents, they are doing their best to keep children safe. Children can be exposed to a good amount of violence by the media, especially from TV and movies. It is important to teach children that this is not real and that guns cause real injuries. Emphasize to them that they should never touch a gun and should always tell an adult if they come across one. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends repeating this message periodically to keep children from forgetting.

Preteens: This is a good time to begin talking with children about ways to solve problems that do not involve violence. With older children, explain to them the consequences of violence and the dangers inherent in the mishandling of guns. Continue to emphasize to children that they should never touch a gun without adult supervision.

Teens: This can be a difficult time to maintain open communication with kids as they become more independent and rebellious. However, maintaining dialogue with your children can help you spot any potential problems. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that, at this point in a child's life, it is easier to keep guns away from teens than to keep teens away from guns, which are often glamorized in the media. It is important that parents watch for signs of depression or changes in behavior, as teens feeling this way are at an increased risk for suicide.

For More Information:

Center to Prevent Handgun Violence
1225 Eye Street, NW, Room 1100
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 289-7319

National School Safety Center
141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite #11
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 373-9977