



**YOUR Community, YOUR Neighbors**  
**OUR RESPONSIBILITY**  
get involved today

# ***Columbia Neighborhood Watch***

**December 2024**

## **Board of Directors**

Herb Watchinski Jr—President  
Jeff Hempstead— Vice President  
Susan Dickerson—Secretary  
Keith Caldwell—Treasurer  
Rod Perry—Development  
Ibrahim Ajiserere—IT/Social Media  
Larry Kirschner—Captain Liaison  
Paul Corbin—Captain Liaison  
Nancy Corbin—Public Safety  
Officer Jason McClintic—Police Liaison  
Officer Brad Anderson—Police Liaison  
Irwin Schneider—Past President  
Spring Walton—Legal Advisor



## ***SEASONS GREETINGS***

***FROM YOUR***

***NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH BOARD***

A special thanks to our members who serve as Captains and Co-Captains.

It is your dedication that makes Neighborhood Watch work.

### **In This Issue:**

<b>CPD Liaisons Corner</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Columbia Police Dept</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Ready Festival</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Neighborhood Services</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Columbia IT Department</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Support our Blue</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Crime Stoppers</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Stop Porch Pirates</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>When a Package is Stolen</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Columbia Fire Dept</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Annual Report</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Humor</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Our Partners</b>	<b>17</b>

COLUMBIA NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



### *Highlights from Officer McClintic*

*THEFT PREVENTION TIPS RELAYED FROM THE COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT'S CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION:*

**#1 thing to protect yourself is to lock your car doors and close your garage doors.**

Groups of people (mostly juveniles) walk around at night and check car doors and enter open garage doors. If the doors are locked, they usually keep moving until they find easier targets.

Scammers often trick their victims into sending gift cards, itunes cards, or Google play cards. They claim the funds can be used to pay for missed jury duty, taxes, bail, debt collections, or towards fees to pay for computer virus protection. Scammers also contact their victims via email, text, or facebook and pretend to be a friend and ask for gift cards.

The scammers express the need for quick action. They tell their victims not to tell anyone what they are doing, and that they will be arrested if they hang up or don't cooperate.

If a friend has asked you to buy them gift cards, please talk to that friend in person or over the phone before you purchase any.

Government agencies will not ask for gift cards as payment for fines or bail.

If you think someone is trying to steal your money with one of these scams, please call 311 to have an officer contact you for more potential report details.

---

---

## Public Safety Enhanced Through Police, Neighborhood Association & Business Partnerships

The collaboration between local law enforcement and Flock Safety demonstrates the powerful impact of combining modern technology with proactive policing. Flock Safety's automated license plate reading (ALPR) cameras serve as silent sentinels, helping law enforcement respond more quickly and effectively to criminal activity while respecting privacy concerns.

These cameras, strategically placed at key intersections, capture vehicle information that proves invaluable in investigating and solving crimes. The system only retains data for a limited time and is accessible solely to authorized law enforcement personnel, ensuring both security and privacy.

"The Flock Safety System is a powerful investigative tool," explains Police Chief Jill Schlude. "We're eager to see positive results in both increased efficiency and solvability of cases that might otherwise go cold."

The success of this police-technology partnership opens opportunities for neighborhood associations and businesses to enhance their own security. These groups can purchase and maintain their own Flock Safety cameras, working with local law enforcement to optimize camera placement and expand the surveillance network. This approach allows neighborhoods and businesses to take an active role in their security while supporting law enforcement efforts.

The visible presence of security measures has already contributed to a documented decrease in criminal activity in areas with camera coverage. By potentially including neighborhood associations in this initiative, the partnership could foster stronger bonds between law enforcement and community members while creating an environment of mutual trust and cooperation.

The implementation of Flock Safety cameras represents a significant advancement in community safety infrastructure. As this collaboration grows and potentially expands to include neighborhood groups, the network of protection will become even more effective at creating safer communities through the power of technology and partnership.

## Boone County Ready Festival

September was National Preparedness Month and the Neighborhood Watch Board participated.



### About the Event

Boone County OEM hosted the annual, community-wide **Boone County Ready Festival on Thursday, September 12th, 2024, at Cosmo Park in Columbia.** This event recognizes everyday heroes in the response and preparedness fields while fostering preparedness and building resiliency in our community.

**Guerry Semones was the winner of the \$20 Cheddars gift card!**

## **Code Corner: Residential Code Cases in FY2024**

Neighborhood Services, part of the City's Housing & Neighborhood Services Department, handled 5,957 residential code issues in the City's 2024 fiscal year ending September 30. This is a 12% increase from the previous year. Solid Waste cases including roll cart violations and trash out early made up the largest number with 2,056 followed by landscape management (tall grass and weeds) at 1,364 and health nuisance cases at 854. Resident complaints accounted for about a third of the cases with the remainder proactively identified by staff.

Neighborhood Services referred 119 cases to the municipal prosecutor when escalated enforcement was required.

Neighborhood Services is also responsible for rental housing compliance and ended the year with 28,282 units and 9,690 buildings in compliance. In 2024, staff responded to 300 tenant complaints.

Residential code enforcement has a connection with community safety. Abandoned and neglected properties may attract criminal activity and lower property value. Properties with code violations may also indicate other illegal activity occurring.

If there is an issue Neighborhood Services can assist with, contact us at 874-CITY or [neighborhood@CoMo.gov](mailto:neighborhood@CoMo.gov).

As we approach the holiday season, it is important to be aware of the rise in fraudulent websites that capitalize on Black Friday deals to scam unsuspecting consumers. Cybercriminals are increasingly targeting shoppers by creating convincing yet malicious websites offering “too good to be true” deals. These websites can be used to steal sensitive information that they can then leverage in various ways, including keeping your data to target you for future attacks.

Fake websites thrive on major consumer events, like Black Friday, where some consumers can be so eager for discounts that they sometimes overlook the security of the websites that they are shopping on. These sites often mimic legitimate retail brands, featuring attractive offers that seem legitimate at first glance.

### How to stay safe:

1. **Double-check website URLs:** Make sure the site uses HTTPS; if a webpage does not use HTTPS, you’ll see a message saying that the site is “Not secure” in the URL field.
2. **Avoid Unrealistic Deals:** If it is too good to be true, then it probably is.
3. **Beware of Social Media Ads:** Be cautious about clicking links from unknown social media accounts or pop-up ads promoting Black Friday deals.
4. **Make sure the device you are shopping on is up to date:** Regardless of the device that you are using to shop for those deals, make sure that you update it to the latest release/version.
5. **Use Trusted Payment Methods:** Stick to reputable payment methods (such as Credit Cards or PayPal) that offer buyer protection in case of fraud.

By staying vigilant and following these tips, you can protect yourself from fraud and enjoy a safe shopping experience this holiday season.

## Speaker is available

Just a reminder, if your organization or neighborhood would like a speaker, we can provide an informative talk on Neighborhood Watch from 20 minutes to as little as 5 minutes. We will answer any questions your members may have. To arrange, please contact us at: [col.neighwatch@gmail.com](mailto:col.neighwatch@gmail.com)

Show your support for our Police. To raise awareness we are selling “Back the Blue” signs for your yard or window at a cost of \$20 which is considered a charitable donation to a 502(c)3 organization.



The sign will be delivered and can be purchased on our website or click below.

Control click the button below

[PURCHASE SIGN](#)



The Crimestoppers Board had their last meeting of the year on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. We're off until January. Crimestoppers has been working with the Boone County Coalition Against Violence. These are the mothers who have had a son or daughter murdered in Boone County. This coalition provides moral support to the victims families of homicides. In most cases a suspect has not been charged. Crimestoppers is working with them to let everyone know about calling Crimestoppers with any information that would lead to an arrest and also get paid in the process. The tips that Crimestoppers have received have been mostly drug related or warrants. Unfortunately most people never call back to see if their tip has panned out. We did pay out one tip on an old case for 600.00. Crimestoppers has been working with Jason Berry and his family to bring to justice the person or persons who were involved with the shooting in the alley on 9<sup>th</sup> street downtown during Mizzou Homecoming weekend 2023, that injured Jason. One person had been arrested but was eventually released. The family has put up a \$5,000.00 reward along with the \$600.00 from Crimestoppers. There is still an active \$5,000.00 reward for the double homicide and shooting that occurred on Oakbrook Drive in the county. The Sheriff's Office is preparing to do a media blitz to get some more tips. We were excited to work with Columbia Neighborhood Watch in aiding the police department in getting approval for the use of the FLOCK Camera system by speaking to the city council.

Remember our motto, "If You See Something, Say Something!" You'll Remain Anonymous and You can receive a reward UP TO \$2,500.00 leading to an arrest on any felony related charge. Call 573.875.TIPS!

Crime stoppers Board Officers:

John Fields, President

Matt Garrett, Vice President

Terry Robb, Secretary

Karen Taylor, Treasurer

---

In an age where doorstep deliveries have become the norm, the threat of package theft, or porch piracy, looms larger than ever. Due to the increase in package theft and the financial burden on the shipper & delivery services, most of the responsibility has been pushed to the buyer (package receiver).

Prevention is key when it comes to porch pirates.

As an expert in package theft prevention and an advocate for secure solutions, we understand the importance of safeguarding your deliveries. Here are six actionable tips to help you thwart porch pirates and ensure your packages reach your hands safely.

### **1. Set up delivery notifications.**

Embrace the power of technology to stay one step ahead of potential package thieves. Most major delivery services offer delivery notification services that keep you informed about the status of your deliveries in real time. These alerts allow you to minimize the time your packages spend unattended on your porch. Don't forget to keep your sound notifications on during delivery days to stay vigilant.

### **2. Require a signature.**

If your delivery is particularly expensive or personally valuable, you may want to consider requiring a signature upon delivery. With most USPS, UPS, and FedEx deliveries, you can opt in for protection features like this for a small fee. This additional security measure ensures that your package ends up in the right hands, not those of porch pirates.

### **3. Invest in a secure package delivery lockbox.**

According to one expert, "Recipients would be smart to try to ensure there's a secure container or location to store packages until they can be retrieved." Easily, one of the most effective ways to safeguard your deliveries is by utilizing a secure package delivery lockbox. Lockboxes like [Adorn's Package Box](#) keep your

---

Package theft has been increasing drastically over the last few years; in fact more than, more than [40% of Americans](#) have felt the sting of package theft. After they discover the package is missing and experience the frustration that comes with it, the question that arises next is: What do I do now?

We will warn you—due to the increase in package theft and the financial burden on the shipper & delivery services, the burden has shifted to the buyer (package receiver) and it has become more difficult to receive reimbursement or replacement. The number one thing you can do is protect yourself and try to [prevent porch pirates from stealing packages](#).

However, here are 4 steps to consider if a package is stolen from the doorstep.

### **1. Contact the Delivery Company**

It's probably best to contact the delivery company first. They should have information about when and where the package was delivered. It is important to determine if the package actually made it off the truck, if it is lost in the shipping channels, or if it's still in a warehouse somewhere.

Once it is determined that the box was left out for delivery but wasn't received, each shipper has their own process they follow. Here's a detailed look at what to do for each popular delivery provider.

#### **Amazon**

If you purchased the item at Amazon, go to your orders and initiate an [A-to-z Guarantee refund](#), which covers a refund on lost, stolen, or damaged. There are a number of requirements and rules for this process, but generally it first directs customers to the seller (if it isn't Amazon). If they don't respond within 48 hours, Amazon allows for the filing of a claim within 90 days of the purchase.

#### **FedEx**

For FedEx deliveries, go online and [file a claim](#). Make sure to have the package's shipping tracking number to get started. Through this portal you can report the missing package, upload additional documentation, check the status, or cancel your claim. Doing it online allows the victim to receive claim payments and track it for up to 12 months. Typically, the company covers up to \$100 of the total value of the shipment or the full amount insured.

#### **UPS**

If the tracking information shows that UPS delivered the package but it is nowhere to be found, contact the sender of the package to initiate a trace process with UPS. To note, UPS will not allow a claim to be filed until [24 hours](#) after the delivery took place. The sender will then follow up with you on the progress of your shipment. Generally, UPS will not reimburse a consumer if the package was delivered to a residence and

then stolen. It will work with both the sender and the purchaser, as well as, law enforcement for a given claim. However, UPS will not issue a refund unless there's proof that it was responsible.

### **USPS**

First, file an online request at [USPS](#) to begin a search for the missing item and to get the local post office involved. If after 7 days the package is not found, the next step is to submit a Missing Mail Search Request. At this point, enter all pertinent information and pictures.

If the package is not found, USPS customers who used Priority Mail Express can request a refund, and those that paid for insurance can file a claim. This process must be started no later than 60 days from the date of mailing.

### **2. Contact the Retailer**

If the issue cannot be quickly and fully resolved through the shipper, contact the store or retailer next. Different companies have different policies on replacement. Due to the financial burden of theft, over the last 12 months, retailers have become less likely to replace or refund.

Larger companies may have different policies than smaller retailers; a lot depends on how well they work with customers and whether or not they can afford to replace items on a regular basis. Also, if it's a one-of-a-kind product from somewhere like Etsy, then a replacement might not even be an option.

Still, it's worth reaching out to the retailer. They might have great customer service and create a customer for life with their response to the issue.

### **3. Report the Package Theft to the Police**

Make no mistake, porch piracy is a crime. Reporting the theft to law enforcement is an important step that often gets skipped because the victim doesn't want the hassle or doesn't want to bother the police. But by reporting the crime, it gives the police a better chance of catching the thief in a certain area.

Also, if the crime is reported it will become part of the local and national crime statistics. Why is this important? Because increasingly more states are pushing for stronger penalties for porch pirates. If they can prove the issue is a serious problem, it will help get support for stronger penalties and greater vigilance.

Also, if a buyer is filing for an insurance reimbursement, a police report will probably need to be submitted along with the claim.

### **4. Contact the Credit Card Company**

Another option is to contact the credit card company used in the purchase. Many credit cards policies offer free insurance on every purchase, so it is worth finding out what protection benefits may be available for package theft. To note, there's usually a value limit on these types of benefits and it will typically require a police report.

The [onus is on the buyer](#) to deal with package theft, while unlikely, there are several

## Stay Warm and Safe This Winter

As the chill of winter settles in across Columbia, many of us turn to fireplaces, space heaters, and other heating equipment to keep our homes cozy. While these bring comfort, they can also pose fire risks if not used carefully. In fact, heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths. Nearly half of these fires occur between December and February, making it critical to prioritize safety this season.

### Essential Heating Safety Tips

#### **Keep It Clear**

Always maintain a three-foot “safe zone” around any heating equipment, including space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves. This keeps flammable materials, children, and pets at a safe distance.

#### **Inspect and Maintain**

Have a qualified professional inspect and clean your heating equipment and chimneys every year. Proper maintenance reduces the risk of fires and improves efficiency.

#### **Install and Test Alarms**

Install both smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors throughout your home. Test them monthly to ensure they’re working properly. CO poisoning is a silent, deadly hazard, especially in winter.

#### **Use Heating Equipment Correctly**

Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions when using space heaters. Never use your oven to heat your home. Turn off space heaters before leaving the room or going to bed.

#### **Be Prepared for Emergencies**

If you smell gas near your heater, don’t light the appliance. Leave your home immediately and contact the fire department or gas company from a safe location.

### The Risks in Numbers

Space heaters and heating stoves account for nearly half (46%) of heating fires, but a staggering 76% of fire deaths.

Kitchen or cooking areas are the source of 18% of heating fires.

Fires involving fireplaces or chimneys are less common but account for 27% of direct property damage from heating equipment fires.

### Preventing Fireplace Fires

If you use a fireplace, ensure it has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be allowed to cool completely before being placed in a metal container, stored

## Columbia Neighborhood Watch's ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Columbia Neighborhood Watch 503 E. Nifong, #183 Columbia, MO 65201-3792	Phone: 573-874-7426	Email: col.neighwatch@gmail.com Website: columbianeighborhoodwatch.org
---	---------------------	---

### Mission Statement:

The mission of Columbia Neighborhood Watch is to inform, train and encourage residents to work together to establish neighborhood watch programs with the goal of reducing crime."

Dear Friends,

With the Coronavirus ending we are back to both in-person and webinar stile training. Our "Purchase of Service Contract" with the City which was our main funding is still up in the air.

Some highlights were:

### **Some highlights were:**

Update Captains list - Completed, but is an ongoing task

Continue to improve the Training Power Point - We have updated the Power Point numerous times and will continue to update as needed.

6 Training sessions - We have completed 6 in-person training, which resulted in 96 new members.

Attend at least one public event.

We have attended several events on National Night Out and will be attending the Ready Festival on Sept 12<sup>th</sup>.

Apply for grants - Being done. We have applied for 20 grants. We won 3 in-kind grants worth over \$10,000. We are waiting for answers back on 5 grant requests.

Send Thank You to new Captains/ Co-Captains - Being done, we thank all Captains and Co-Captains each year through our Newsletter. In addition we have 2 board members that are assigned as Captain Liaisons.

Send Newsletter Quarterly - Being Done

In addition to these goals the Board addressed several other items.

Our Budget.

The City of Columbia, through the Police Department, has given us a “Purchase of Service Contract”.

We continue to earned the **Better Business Bureau accreditation** and have been awarded the **Torch Award** by the Better Business Bureau last December. In addition, we have the **Gold Seal of Transparency from Guide Star** and have earned **accreditation by Charity Navigator**.

Board member donated their time to the tune of over 2526 hours which calculates out to \$84,595.74 of in-kind service to Columbia Neighborhood Watch.

We are continuing with the Email Service

Has allowed us to contact all of our members.

Helped us to keep our membership Roster up to date. (We have found the residents are very mobile and a number of members have moved out of Columbia.)

**Revenue**

Business Contributions	\$	500.00
In Kind Donations	\$	9,708.71
Public Donations	\$	450.00
Miscellaneous - interest, etc.	\$	23.77
Gerbes	\$	102.65
City of Columbia	\$	5,000.00
<b>Total Revenues and Support</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>15,785.13</b>

**Expenses**

Signs & Brackets	\$	643.05
Promotional Items	\$	1,164.27
Copying	\$	200.00
Email services	\$	364.50
Website & Social Media	\$	520.17
Insurance & General expenses	\$	1,868.00
Computers & Software	\$	679.98
Registratio Fees	\$	10.45
Training Booklets	\$	1,875.00
Board Shirts	\$	185.20
Advertising	\$	100.00
Merchant fees	\$	18.47
Fees	\$	11.25
Mail & postage	\$	384.16
Other	\$	96.95
Mail Service box	\$	468.00
Fundraising expenses	\$	175.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,121.40</b>

**Net assets at end of the year** \$ **7,663.73**



