



YOUR Community, YOUR Neighbors
OUR RESPONSIBILITY
 get involved today

Columbia Neighborhood Watch

September 2025

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Annual Meeting



The Annual Meeting of Columbia Neighborhood Watch will be held on **September 8, 2025 at 6:00 pm in City Hall Conference room A & B**. This is a **Public Meeting**. There will be guest speakers from the Columbia Police Department and Columbia Fire Department.

Our President will start the meeting with our accomplishments for the past year in his State of the Watch presentation to those in attendance. At the end of the meeting we will have a **drawing for door prizes**. The meeting should last approximately 90 minutes..

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Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.



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.

Your Support & Comments Needed:

If you love our work then tell the world! Stories about us from people like you will help us make an even bigger impact in our community. GreatNonprofits – the #1 source of nonprofit stories and feedback – is honoring highly regarded nonprofits with their 2025 Top-Rated List. **Won't you help us** raise visibility for our work by posting a brief story of your experience with us? All content will be visible to potential donors and volunteers. It's easy and only takes 3 minutes! Go here to get started!

<https://greatnonprofits.org/reviews/write/columbia-neighborhood-watch>

Help us at no cost to you:

Participate in the Gerbes Food Stores Community Rewards Program:

THIS GIVES US MUCH NEEDED FUNDS AT NO COST TO YOU

For Gerbes Stores - go to <http://www.gerbes.com>

Once logged into their Gerbes Food Stores account they can search for COLUMBIA NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH either by name or BF527 and then click Enroll. New users will need to create an account which requires some basic information, a valid email address and a *rewards* card.

Participants must swipe their registered Gerbes Food Stores *rewards* card or use the phone number that is related to their registered Gerbes Food Stores *rewards* card when shopping for each purchase to count.

Boone County Ready Festival

September is National Preparedness Month!

About the Event

BCOEM will be hosting our annual, community-wide **Boone County Ready Festival on Thursday, September 18, 2025**, to recognize everyday heroes in the response and preparedness fields while fostering preparedness and building resiliency in our community. This year the family and pet-friendly event will be **from 4 PM to 8 PM at Cosmo Park in Columbia.**

There will be food, activities, crafts, live music and more! Check out the event brochure link below to learn more about this annual community event.

The event aims to enhance community preparedness, foster collaboration and build resilience by engaging our citizens in actively preparing for emergencies and disasters.

<https://ready.boonemo.org/>

Columbia Neighborhood Watch will have a booth at the Ready Festival. Stop by and register for the drawing.



Property Crime in Columbia, Missouri

Columbia, Missouri ranks below average for safety when it comes to property crime and this is why being a member of Columbia Neighborhood Watch is so important for your safety. Here's a breakdown of how it compares nationally:

Property Crime Snapshot

- **Property Crime Rate:** 18.5 incidents per 1,000 residents annually
- **National Percentile:** Columbia is **safer than only 26%** of U.S. cities

Chance of Being a Victim: About **1 in 37** overall, but varies by neighborhood—from **1 in 94** in the southeast to **1 in 37** in central areas

Cost of Crime Comparison	
Location	Cost per Resident (Annual)
Columbia, MO	\$142
U.S. Average	\$136
Missouri Average	\$182
Hazelwood, MO	\$543
Villa Ridge, MO	\$61

Columbia's property crime costs are slightly **above the national average**, but **below the Missouri state average**.

Did you know , that by being a member of Columbia Neighborhood Watch that you are a part of **Homeland Security**.

The current U.S. administration still recognizes **Neighborhood Watch** as part of the broader homeland security framework. The program's mission was expanded in 2002 to include **terrorism prevention and emergency preparedness**, and that emphasis continues today.

Neighborhood Watch is supported by the **National Sheriffs' Association** and remains aligned with the goals of **Citizen Corps**, which was originally launched under the Department of Homeland Security to promote community-based safety and resilience.

While the 2025 Homeland Threat Assessment focuses on evolving threats like cyberattacks, transnational crime, and domestic extremism, it still underscores the importance of **community-level vigilance**—which is exactly where Neighborhood Watch fits in. Your ability as members to **observe, report, and prepare** fulfills the requirement to meet the community-based mission for homeland security.

National Night Out was held on August 5, 2025.

Six groups participated here in Columbia. They were visited by Police, Fire and Neighborhood Watch Board members.

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](#)



Crimestoppers has been moving forward with its new online tips reporting. Since implementing it our tips have increased immensely. Most of the tips are drug and warrant related, we're hoping that will increase with time. Crimestoppers recently showcased cold case crimes on Ricky Dunn and Danielle Marine on KOMU Channel 8. Our Crimestoppers Website has been updated and it's still a work in progress. Not only can you be able to connect with our online reporting, but we're also going to feature where people can make donations to Crimestoppers stoppers for rewards.

Use the new QR code above to provide a tip!!!

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

Smart phone apps that can save your life in an emergency

(These are presented as information only. Columbia Neighborhood Watch does not endorse any of these products)

In emergencies there are smartphone apps with a distress signal tool at your disposal. You can download these apps and use now in times of dire need. Here are four:

Important: Most of these apps use your phone's GPS and location tracking, which may impact and decrease its battery life.

1. Silent Beacon: Emergency Alert System

Silent Beacon, available for iOS and Android, is described by its creators as "the emergency alert system for the digital age." It is a free app and service that uses GPS-tracking to send your location to a custom set of contacts, including 911 or emergency services, through a "distress message."

This distress message can be sent with a touch of the app's button during emergencies when the beacon is activated. Silent Beacon is simple, straightforward and for a free app, it does its job well - send a message and your location via text notification in a jiffy. You never know, that may be enough to save you from trouble one day.

2. bSafe: Personal Safety App

bSafe is another emergency alert app system for iOS and Android that will notify up to four selected contacts, called "Guardians" by the app, in an event of an emergency. bSafe's free version lets you send out a distress message by hitting its SOS button. This notifies your "Guardians" of the emergency via text message and provides them with your location. bCall's premium service costs \$20 a year with a special \$30 promo price for a two-year subscription.

3. Companion: Mobile Personal Safety

If you are looking for a free safety alert app that has real-time location tracking, try the iOS and Android app Companion.

Similar to other safety apps, 3Companion lets you pick your own contacts as your emergency alert recipients.

These "companions," as the app calls them, will then receive a text message with a link to a webpage showing a real-time map of your location.

If your arrival is delayed or you divert from your trip's path, your headphones get unplugged or if your phone's sensors detect a sudden change in your speed, the app will ask you if everything's OK. You'll have 15 seconds to confirm to the app that you're fine and if not, it will proceed to notify your "companions." The app will also give a quick way to call the police in an event of an emergency.

4. LifeLine Response - Panic Button and Safety App

While other emergency alert apps require them to be opened to send out a distress message, Lifeline Response does it a little bit differently - it is activated by holding your finger on your phone's screen. Once the app is activated and your finger is removed from the screen, it starts a series of countdown timers that culminates in a call from LifeLine Response's Verification Center. If the emergency is verified by the center either via verbal confirmation, by a silent alarm code or by non-reply, LifeLine contacts 911 dispatchers directly and provides them your GPS coordinates. Your LifeLine contacts will likewise receive the same emergency information via text and email. LifeLine Response's service is not free. Monthly subscriptions start at \$5 but it offers a free 14-day trial. The app is available for both iOS and Android.

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**

Camera Registration Program creates partnerships for safer streets

The Columbia Police Department is contacting residents and business owners with an innovative approach to community safety: the Camera Registration Program. This voluntary initiative is designed to strengthen public safety throughout Columbia by creating a collaborative network between law enforcement and the community.

What is the Camera Registration Program?

The Camera Registration Program allows residents and businesses with security cameras to voluntarily register their devices with the Columbia Police Department. By participating, community members become valuable partners in maintaining neighborhood safety without sacrificing their privacy or autonomy.

"This program represents a modern approach to community policing," says a Columbia Police spokesperson. "We're leveraging existing technology in our neighborhoods to create a more secure environment for everyone."

Benefits for the Community

Participating in the program offers several advantages for both residents and law enforcement:

Crime Deterrence: Areas with registered cameras may experience reduced criminal activity, as potential wrongdoers know that surveillance coverage exists in these locations.

Enhanced Investigations: When crimes occur, detectives can quickly identify nearby cameras that may have captured relevant footage, significantly improving response times and investigation efficiency.

Stronger Police-Community Relations: The program fosters collaboration between residents and law enforcement, building trust and communication within neighborhoods.

How the Registration Process Works

The registration process is straightforward and respects residents' privacy. Property owners provide basic information about their camera's location to the police department. Importantly, registration does not grant police direct access to cameras or footage – it merely creates a database of camera locations.

When an incident occurs, officers may contact registered camera owners in the vicinity to request voluntary cooperation in providing footage that could assist with investigations. Camera owners maintain complete control over their equipment and can choose whether to provide footage on a case-by-case basis.

Getting Involved

Columbia residents interested in participating can easily register their cameras online. The registration process takes just a few minutes and requires basic information about the camera's location and coverage area.

To register your camera, visit: <https://www.como.gov/police/automated-license-plate-readers/>

The Columbia Police Department emphasizes that the program is entirely voluntary and respects residents' privacy rights while creating opportunities for enhanced community safety. Camera owners maintain complete control over their equipment and footage while helping create a safer community.

The police department notes that every registered camera makes our community safer. We encourage all residents with security cameras to consider joining this critical public safety initiative.

Building Safer Neighborhoods Together

By working together through programs like this, Columbia continues to build stronger, safer neighborhoods where residents and law enforcement collaborate effectively to protect the community they call home. The Camera Registration Program represents just one way residents can actively enhance public safety while maintaining their privacy and autonomy.

For more information about the Camera Registration Program beyond the registration process, contact the Columbia Police Department at 573-874-7652.

Columbia Police Improving Public Safety in 2025

The Columbia Police Department made significant strides last year in its ability to protect and serve our community.

Thanks to the collective efforts of our entire department and the support of the community CPD dedicated to improving operational effectiveness and laying the foundation for a safer and more successful future for Columbia.

Starting with training and recruitment, CPD has increased recruiting across the board. In 2024, the department added 42 new full-time employees in varying positions.

With additional officers on patrol, CPD over the past year increased traffic safety enforcement by more than 200 percent. That number includes only stops for traffic safety, not investigative stops.

The new Columbia Police Training Academy provided a big boost to CPD's recruitment goals. It is the first in-house academy in the history of the nearly 200-year-old department. The academy is a partnership between CPD and Lincoln University.

In October 2024, the first 14 recruits began more than 730 hours of training over 16 weeks, surpassing Missouri's state requirements by more than 130 hours. These recruits will graduated in March, and the next class of recruits has began training.

CPD also adopted Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training for all officers. Developed by the Police Executive Research Forum, this program gives officers tools, skills and options to defuse a range of critical incidents safely and successfully. ICAT has been proven to reduce the use of force and injuries both to the community and to first-responding officers.

CPD has made strides in technology as well. Last fall, CPD received approval from the City Council to add Flock Safety cameras to improve safety for all of Columbia. Once installed throughout the city, these cameras will provide real-time alerts to law enforcement when they detect stolen vehicles or suspect vehicles listed in local, state or national crime databases. They also notify authorities if a vehicle connected to a missing person case, such as an AMBER or Silver alert, is identified.

To help decrease gun violence in Columbia, CPD also joined the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) through the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. This technology provides cutting-edge ballistics analysis that gives CPD detectives the ability to solve gun crimes faster and more accurately.

Columbia Fire Department Hosts Fire Prevention Week Kickoff

Oct. 5, 2025

The Columbia Fire Department invites the community to the Fire Prevention Week Kickoff Event on Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of Missouri Health Care Pavilion, 1701 W. Ash St.

This year's theme is "Charge into Fire Safety: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home." With lithium-ion batteries powering everyday devices like phones, laptops, toys and power tools, it's important to use them safely to prevent overheating, fires or explosions.

Key tips include:

Buy only tested, listed products.

Charge on a hard surface using manufacturer-approved cords.

Recycle batteries properly - never throw them in the trash.

This free, family-friendly event will feature food, games, demonstrations and safety tips for all ages. Join us Oct, 5 to learn more about fire safety and enjoy a fun, educational day with your local



first responders!

Halloween Safety Tips and CFD's annual Halloween Open House at Station 9!

Halloween is only a month away and with that comes the rush to find the best costume, the perfect pumpkin and those amazing decorations for your home. Possibly hidden within all of this fun and excitement are potential fire hazards. The Columbia Fire Department wishes to remind our citizens of some Halloween safety tips to avoid a possible tragedy on what should be a super fun night.

The U.S. Fire Administration reports that between 2011 – 2015, decorations (not including Christmas trees) were the item first ignited in an estimated 840 reported residential structure fires per year. These fires resulted in an average of 2 civilian deaths, 36 civilian injuries and \$11.4 million in direct property damage each year. Decorations which were too close to a heat source (such as a candle or some other type of equipment) accounted for 42% of the fires. A fire can start when candles are too close to decorations or when long, trailing costumes come into contact with candle flames.

To ensure the safety of your trick-or-treaters and to keep your home safe from fire, consider following these safety tips:

- Candles – Consider using battery-powered candles or glow-sticks in jack-o-lanterns.
- Costumes – Stay away from long, trailing fabric and skip and skip elaborate pieces.
- Trick-or-Treating – Remember it is getting darker earlier in the day. Consider lighter-colored costumes or clothing as well as glow sticks or other safe lighting items to keep everyone visible. When your trick-or-treaters go out to collect their bounties, consider going with them to help them safely navigate crossing streets and intersections.
- Decorations – Avoid decorations that would easily burn such as dried flowers, cornstalks, crepe paper and hay (straw) bales. Keep the decorations away from open flames and heat sources, such as light bulbs and heaters.
- Exits – Remember to keep all decorations away from doors or other exits from rooms or spaces. Don't block your escape route.
- Smoke alarms – The Columbia Fire Department reminds residents that smoke alarms save lives. Smoke alarms should be placed on every level of your home and outside of places where people sleep. Check your smoke alarms monthly by pressing the test button. Change your smoke alarm batteries at least twice per year when adjusting clocks for Daylight Saving Time. Replace any smoke alarm over ten (10) years old.

We encourage families to take part in safe alternatives for young trick-or-treaters such as our FREE annual Halloween Open House at Columbia Fire Station 9 (201 Blue Ridge Road) from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m on Friday, October 31. The event features fun activities and games for our young and mature visitors alike, music and loads of candy. We hope to see you there!

Don't Be the Next Victim!

This was the title on a flyer recently posted on the Sheriff's Office Facebook page. The flyer went on to briefly summarize various scams that are being used to steal your money. My guess is that as I write this article, someone in Boone County is having their money stolen by one of these scams...it happens almost every day.

That brings us to the point of this article. What can you do not to become the next victim? What can you do to help your neighbor not to become a victim? The most important step you can take is to educate yourself and be aware. So, let's get educated!

Initial Contact

Scammers usually start their scam by throwing a wide net to elicit a response from potential victims. Email, text, phone calls, or internet is how these initial contacts usually take place. Once someone responds, the real scam starts. If you are contacted by someone you do not know and have not ever met in real life for any of the following, you are being scammed:

- To put money into an investment
- To repair a virus on your computer
- To protect a "hacked" account
- To pay bail or avoid arrest
- To move money or make money deposits
- To go to a crypto currency ATM (Bitcoin)
- To buy gift cards for an unusual reason
- To send money to a potential love interest you have never met in real life - commonly called a romance scam

Your Money Will Be Gone Forever

Some scams will develop more slowly over multiple contacts, and some will move quickly with one contact. However, the end goal is always the same. That goal is to steal your money. The scam process will involve the scammer lying to you about some problem or issue to build trust and always ends with you providing money or information to the scammer. You are in control here! If you do not provide the money and/or information the scam will fail.

Because of the complex nature of these scams, it is very rare for law enforcement to successfully investigate and recover victim funds in these cases. For example, scammers often use crypto currency because the transactions cannot be reversed. They will also often ask you to move the conversation to smart phone apps like Telegram and WhatsApp because they cannot be traced. Scammers will use high pressure tactics to make you doubt yourself and overcome your resistance. Believe this article not the scammer. Do not be fooled!

Remember, you are in control! If contacted by email, text, phone calls, or internet, do not provide information or money to anyone you do not know in real life. If you fall for one of these scams your money will be gone forever! It is up to you to prevent these scams by being educated and aware!

Additionally, help each other. If you hear or become aware of a neighbor, relative, or friend (especially the elderly) being involved in something that sounds like one of these scams, try to educate them and provide some guidance.

Prevention Is Up to You

Stop all contact with the scammer immediately.

Be extremely skeptical of any online contacts that involve money and someone you have not met in real life.

Use unique and long passwords on all financial accounts.

Use two-factor authentication on all financial accounts.

If you own cryptocurrency, NEVER provide private keys or wallet passwords to anyone.

Help educate your neighbors, relatives, and friends.

Call 311 to report suspicious incidents



DON'T BE THE NEXT VICTIM



If you are contacted by email, text, phone, or internet by someone *you do not know...*

To put money into an investment

To repair a virus on your computer

To protect a “hacked” account

To pay bail or avoid arrest

To move money or make money deposits

To go to a crypto currency ATM (Bitcoin)

To buy gift cards for an unusual reason

You are being scammed!!

- Scammers use crypto currency because the transactions cannot be reversed.
- They use phone apps like Telegram and WhatsApp because they cannot be traced.
 - Scammers will use high pressure tactics to make you doubt yourself.

Your money will be gone FOREVER!



- **Stop all contact with the scammer immediately.**
- Be extremely skeptical of any online contacts that involve money and someone you have not met in real life.
- Use unique and long passwords on all financial accounts.
- Use two-factor authentication on all financial accounts.
- Call 311 to report suspicious incidents.

Protecting Your Home While on Vacation: A Community Effort

Fall is here, and many of us will be taking vacations in the cooler weather. While enjoying your time away, it's natural to worry about leaving your home unoccupied. By taking some proactive steps and leveraging the power of our Neighborhood Watch, you can significantly enhance your home's security and enjoy your trip with greater peace of mind.

A little preparation goes a long way, and community vigilance is our strongest asset.

Before You Depart: Securing Your Home

The most crucial step is preparing your home before you leave.

- **Secure All Entry Points:** Thoroughly check and lock all doors and windows, including less obvious spots like basement windows, side doors, and especially your garage and any sheds. Consider reinforcing vulnerable locks if needed.
- **Make Your Home Look Occupied:** A lived-in home is a less appealing target.
 - Use automatic timers for interior lights to mimic normal activity.
 - Consider setting a radio or television on a timer for the illusion of occupancy. Some smart speakers such as Amazon Alexa's "Away Mode" have features that can even simulate normal household conversation and sounds.
 - Manage mail and newspapers: Arrange for the post office to hold your mail, cancel newspaper delivery, or have a trusted neighbor collect them.
 - If you'll be gone for an extended period, arrange for lawn care. An overgrown yard can signal an empty home.
- **Don't Advertise Your Absence:** In today's digital age, it's easy to accidentally reveal your vacation plans.
- **Avoid posting vacation details** on social media before or during your trip.
- Turn down your home phone ringer or use a generic answering machine message that doesn't indicate you're out of town.
- **Involve Your Neighbors and Neighborhood Watch:** One of the most effective security measures is community strength.
- **Inform a trusted neighbor or Neighborhood Watch member** of your travel plans. Provide them with your contact information and a key for emergencies.
- Ask them to **keep an eye on your property:** collect mail/newspapers, occasionally park a car in your driveway, or put out/bring in trash bins. This mutual support is vital for a secure community.

- **Deter Potential Intruders and Report Suspicious Activity:** Be aware that a common tactic for burglars is to knock or ring the doorbell to see if anyone is home. If no one answers, they may attempt a break-in, often targeting less visible entry points. If you notice this type of suspicious behavior in our neighborhood, **report it to the police**. This information helps authorities track patterns and investigate potential crimes.
- **Consider Security Camera Systems:** Cameras are powerful deterrents and valuable tools for law enforcement. They can capture activity that helps identify criminals and solve crimes, not just on your property but potentially for your neighbors as well. Many affordable and easy-to-install smart camera options are available today.

Secure Valuables: Store valuable items out of sight. For high-value possessions, consider a safe deposit box or a hidden home safe. Taking photos or keeping a detailed record of your belongings can be helpful for insurance and investigation purposes.

While You're Away: Stay Connected

Ensure your trusted contact checks on your house periodically as arranged. Provide them with contact information for non-crime emergencies (e.g., plumber for a leak, alarm company).

Upon Your Return: Observe and Report

Before entering your home, take a moment to **observe your property**. If anything looks suspicious (e.g., broken window, damaged door, door ajar), **do not enter**. Go to a safe location nearby and call the police immediately.

Community Vigilance is Key!

Keeping our neighborhood safe is a collective effort. By taking these steps to secure your own home and by looking out for your neighbors' properties when they are away, we create a stronger, more secure community for everyone.

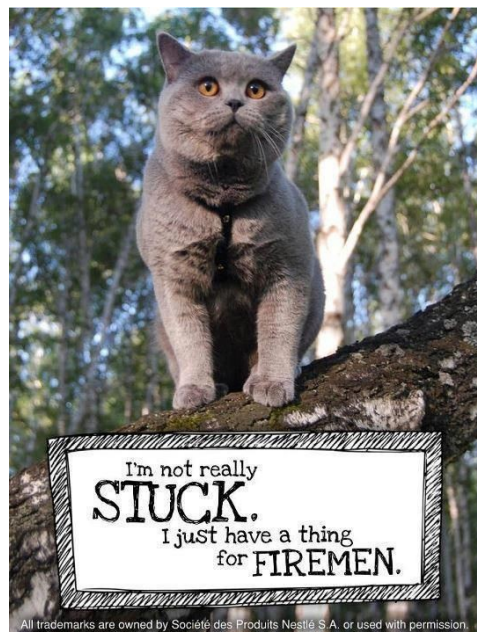
Remember, if you have information about a crime in Boone County, you can report it anonymously through Crimestoppers.

Crimestoppers covers all of Boone County, and your identity is never known or included in police reports. The tipline number is **573-875-TIPS (573-875-8477)**. Community participation with police and prosecutors is vital, and Crimestoppers provides a safe and anonymous way to contribute.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer vacation!

A man on a train confided to his seatmate, "I just got out of prison this morning. It's going to be tough facing old friends"

"I sympathize with you." the other man said. "I'm heading home from Congress."





OFFICE OF THE
PROSECUTING
ATTORNEY



**CRIME
STOPPERS**
875-TIPS

