YOUR Community, YOUR Neighbors
OUR RESPONSIBILITY
get involved today

Columbia Neighborhood Watch

September 2026

Board of Directors

Herb Watchinski Jr—President

Jeff Hempstead— Vice President

Susan Dickerson—Secretary

Keith Caldwell—Treasurer

Ed Darling—Signs

Ibrahim Ajiserere—IT/Social Media

Larry Kirschner—Captain Liaison

Officer Kyle Thornsberry—Police Liaison

Irwin Schneider—Past President

Spring Walton—Legal Advisor

It is our golden anniversary!

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

A Legacy of Awareness, Partnership, And Community Pride

50 YEARS STRONG

In This Issue:

Message of Graditude	**2**
CPD Liaisons Corner	**3**
Boone County Ready	**4**
Fall Safety	**5**
New Scam	**6**
Support our Blue	**7**
Columbia Fire Dept	**8-11**
Columbia Police Dept	**12-13**
Humor	**14**
Our Partners	**15**

Come join us at our Annual Meeting on Monday, September 14, 2026 - 6:00 pm at City Hall.

There will be:

- **Door prizes**
- **Light refreshments**
- **Police & Fire Chiefs guest speakers**

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

A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE

Every success story in Neighborhood Watch begins with people who care.

We thank the generations of volunteers, block captains, board members, law enforcement professionals, community partners, and residents who have contributed their time, energy, and dedication over the past 50 years.

Because of your commitment, Columbia Neighborhood Watch continues its mission as a nonprofit organization dedicated to crime prevention through education, awareness, and strong partnerships with local law enforcement

As we reflect on the past, we honor the thousands of residents who have attended meetings, reported concerns, welcomed new neighbors, shared information, and demonstrated that prevention begins with participation.

We look forward to inspiring a new generation of neighbors to stay informed, stay involved, and help strengthen our community for years to come.

---

50 YEARS OF IMPACT

- Encouraging neighbor-to-neighbor communication
- Promoting crime prevention awareness
- Supporting safer neighborhoods through education
- Building partnerships between residents and law enforcement
- Strengthening community connections across Columbia

1976–2026

Neighbors Helping Neighbors for 50 Years

Celebrating our past. Strengthening our future. Building safer neighborhoods together.

Highlights from Officer Thornsberry

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.

<u>Government agencies will not ask for gift cards as payment for fines or bail.</u>

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.

Boone County Ready

September is National Preparedness Month!

Learn more about National Preparedness Month.

About the Event

BCOEM will be hosting our annual, community-wide **Boone County Ready Festival on Thursday, September 17, from 3:00 - 7:00 PM at Cosmo Park - Lamb Shelter.** The rain date will be Thursday, October 1st at the same time and place **,** to recognize everyday heroes in the response and preparedness fields while fostering preparedness and building resiliency in our community.

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 has been renamed to align with the community preparedness campaign, Boone County Ready, that was launched March of 2022. Boone County Ready 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 our drawing.

September:

Back-to-School Safety: Drivers need to be extra cautious around school zones and bus stops. Remind children about pedestrian safety.

Outdoor Lighting: With days getting shorter, check and replace any outdoor lighting to ensure pathways and entrances are well-lit.

October:

Halloween Safety: Parents should accompany young children while trick-or-treating.

Fire Safety: October is **FIRE PREVENTION MONTH**. With the use of candles and decorations, remember to keep flammable items away from open flames and to check smoke detectors and replace batteries.

Yard Maintenance: Clear fallen leaves regularly to prevent slips and falls.

November:

Thanksgiving Safety: Remember kitchen safety, especially when cooking large meals. Keep an eye on the stove and DO NOT leave cooking unattended.

Heating Safety: As temperatures drop, ensure that heating systems are inspected and maintained. Remember to keep flammable items away from heaters.

Travel Safety: For those traveling, ensure homes are secure and inform neighbors to keep an eye out for any suspicious activity. Ask CPD for a “Watch in Passing” while away. You can ask for a “WIP” by calling CPD at (573) 874-7652.

Increase neighborhood watch activities during the holiday season to deter potential burglaries. **Report any and all suspicious activities to 311 in Boone County.**

Common accident scam warning signs

- A caller claims a family member was in a crash and urgently needs money.
- Someone demands immediate payment for bail, legal fees, or medical expenses.
- The caller pressures you to act before verifying the story.

Payment is requested through gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency, or similar hard-to-trace methods.

What to do

- Hang up and independently contact the person involved or the relevant agency using a number you look up yourself.
- Do not send money or provide personal information during the call.

Report suspicious calls to local law enforcement.

1 If you're asking because you received a specific call, text, or message, tell me what they said (without sharing sensitive information), and I can help assess whether it matches known scam tactics.

2 If you're in Columbia, Missouri and receive a suspected scam call:

1. **Hang up immediately** and do not provide personal, financial, or payment information.

Report the incident to local law enforcement. The City of Columbia advises residents in the Columbia/Boone County area to call **3-1-1 (non-emergency)** to report police-impersonation scam calls

If the caller claimed to be from the Columbia Police Department, contact the department directly through official channels to verify the claim rather than calling any number provided by the caller.

Columbia Police have specifically warned that scammers may impersonate officers, claim there is a warrant or legal issue, and demand money. They note that law enforcement will not request payments over the phone or through gift cards.

See Something, Say Something

A quick phone call or conversation with a neighbor can prevent a crime before it happens. Thank you for doing your part to help keep Columbia’s neighborhoods safe, connected, and welcoming this summer.

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

A BIG THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Columbia Fire Department, I want to offer my sincere thanks for your support of the Proposition 1 vote. Your support was more than a vote for the Fire Department. It was a vote for public safety, for the people who serve this community, and for our ability to provide the dependable emergency services Columbia needs as it continues to grow.

Because of that support, the future of CFD is bright and sustainable. Proposition 1 gives us the opportunity to make responsible, long-term investments in our people and our operational capacity. In the months and years ahead, we will be very busy recruiting, hiring, and preparing additional firefighters and staff as we build out the organization. Our goal is straightforward: to provide the best protection and emergency response we can for every person, family, neighborhood, and business in Columbia. That work will require more than simply adding positions. We must hire the right people, train them well, develop strong leaders, and make certain our growth strengthens the service the community receives. Building an organization responsibly takes time, but the support provided through Proposition 1 gives us a stable foundation from which to move forward.

Fire protection does not operate independently from the rest of Columbia's public-safety system. CFD and the Columbia Police Department have different responsibilities, but our missions are closely connected and often interdependent. On many calls—vehicle crashes, medical emergencies, fires, hazardous situations, public-safety threats, and major incidents—firefighters and police officers work side by side. CFD personnel depend on CPD officers to secure scenes, manage traffic, protect responders and the public, and address law-enforcement concerns that may arise during an emergency. CPD, in turn, depends on our firefighters and emergency medical personnel to provide rescue, fire suppression, medical care, hazard control, and other specialized emergency services. Neither department can fulfill its mission as effectively without the other.

That relationship is built on communication, coordination, trust, and a shared commitment to serving Columbia. When an emergency occurs, the public does not experience separate departmental missions. You experience one public-safety response. The strength of that response depends on our ability to work together.

Thank you cont'

Neighborhood Watch members are an important part of that same public-safety partnership. Your awareness, involvement, and willingness to look out for one another help make Columbia safer and more resilient. Public safety is strongest when residents, first responders, law enforcement, local leaders, and community organizations understand that we all have a role in protecting the place we call home.

We are grateful for the confidence Columbia has placed in CFD through Proposition 1. We understand the responsibility that comes with that trust, and we intend to honor it through careful planning, responsible growth, and continued accountability to the community. There is a great deal of work ahead of us, and we are ready to get started. Thank you for supporting your firefighters, your police officers, and the shared public-safety mission that protects Columbia every day.

Brian Schaeffer, Fire Chief

FIRE PREVENTION

October is an important month for the Columbia Fire Department and the community we serve. Fire Prevention Week will be observed October 4–10, allowing us to focus on the simple decisions each of us can make to prevent fires, protect our families, and make our neighborhoods safer.

This year's theme is "Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower." The campaign focuses on lithium-ion batteries and the rechargeable devices that have become part of our everyday lives. Phones, tablets, laptops, power tools, toys, e-bikes, scooters, and many other products depend on these batteries. They are convenient and generally safe when used properly, but a damaged battery or incorrect charger can create a serious fire hazard.

A few basic habits can make a meaningful difference. Use the charging cord that came with the device or one approved by its manufacturer. Charge devices on a hard, flat surface where heat can escape—not on a bed, couch, or under a pillow. Unplug devices after they are fully charged, and stop using any battery that becomes unusually hot, begins to swell, produces an unusual odor, or shows signs of damage.

Larger batteries, including those used in e-bikes, scooters, and power tools, require particular care. Never charge them where they could block an exit. If a battery fails and a fire develops, everyone in the home must have a clear path to safety.

Fire Prevention Week also reminds us to review the fundamentals of home fire safety. Test every smoke alarm in your home and make sure alarms are installed where they are needed. Replace any alarm that is more than 10 years old. Develop a home escape plan, identify two ways out when possible, and establish an outdoor meeting place where everyone can be accounted for. Most importantly, practice the plan. During a fire, smoke, heat, and confusion leave little time to decide what to do.

If a fire occurs, get outside, remain outside, and call 911 from a safe location. Do not return for possessions or pets. Firefighters have the training and protective equipment to enter dangerous conditions; residents do not.

.

I

Fire prevention is not limited to one department or one week in October. It is a shared responsibility that depends on awareness, education, and people looking out for one another. Neighborhood Watch members are especially important to that effort. You know your neighborhoods, you recognize changing conditions, and you are often in the best position t share safety information with residents who may otherwise not receive it.

We encourage you to use Fire Prevention Week as an opportunity to start a conversation with your family and neighbors. Check on older adults and residents who may need assistance testing alarms or preparing an escape plan. Talk with children about what a smoke alarm sounds like and what they should do when they hear one. Take a few minutes to examine how rechargeable devices are being used and charged throughout your home.

The best crisis is the one we prevent. Although the Columbia Fire Department will always be there for you when you need us, reducing risk remains the most effective tool we have for preventing harm, protecting lives, and reducing property loss.

Thank you for being our partners in that mission and for helping make Columbia a safer place to live, work, and raise a family

Navigating door-to-door sales

As warmer weather brings increased outdoor activity to Columbia, residents often notice an influx of door-to-door salespeople. While many solicitors represent legitimate businesses—ranging from home security providers to roofing contractors—unannounced visitors at your front door can present unique safety and fraud concerns. Understanding local guidelines and practicing situational awareness helps keep our neighborhoods secure.

Know the signs of legitimate sales

Valid door-to-door representatives typically carry visible identification and business licenses. In Missouri, legitimate solicitors must present proper credentials upon request. Be wary of vendors who:

- Refuse to show company identification or a business license.
- Demand immediate cash payments or offer "today-only" home improvement discounts.
- Attempt to peer through windows or enter your home under the guise of an inspection.
- Walk around to the rear of your property after receiving no response at the front door.

Staying vigilant and communicating with neighbors remains our strongest defense against community crime.

Best practices for homeowners

1. **Speak through the door:** You are under no obligation to open your door to a stranger. A polite "I'm not interested" through a closed door or video doorbell is sufficient.
2. **Never allow entry:** Do not allow unverified solicitors into your home for any reason, regardless of their sales pitch.
3. **Display signage:** Posting a clear "No Soliciting" notice near your front door signals to solicitors that they should bypass your residence.

Verify independent claims: If a salesperson claims to represent a local utility, school, or municipal program, verify their pitch independently before providing personal information or financial commitments.

When to report suspicious activity

Door-to-door solicitation can sometimes serve as a cover for casing homes prior to a burglary. If you observe someone lingering between properties, peering into parked cars or walking into backyards, report the activity by calling the non-emergency number 311. For active crimes in progress or immediate threats, dial 911.


THE KEY IS UNDER THE MAT, JUST LET YOURSELF IN.


Hunting Dog
For Sale


One, two three, BREATHE
He's dead, Jim


WHEEE!!!


ONE TEAM
FIRE
RESCUE
POLICE
ONE FIGHT

COLUMBIA POLICE
SEAL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, MO
Missouri

SHERIFF
STATE OF MISSOURI
BOONE COUNTY
MO.

BOONE FIRE RESCUE COUNTY
BOONE COUNTY
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

CRIME STOPPERS
875-TIPS

