

June 7, 2018, Public Safety Town Hall Meeting

University Heights United Methodist Church 7-8:30 p.m.

More than 150 attendees.

Speakers from Police Department:

Al Fowler, Public Education Specialist, North Central Precinct, 770-724-7616,
alfowler@dekalbcountyga.gov

Maj. Nicole Rutland, North Central Precinct Commander, 770-724-7472 (office), 404-759-0032 (county cell), narutland@dekalbcountyga.gov

Sergeant J.E. Neal, DeKalb County Police Uniform Division, 770-724-7600, jeneal@dekalbcountyga.gov

Marylee Putnam, LRSCA President: Welcome, everyone. Tonight, we'll talk about security because of recent burglaries in the area. Will get info from our Neighborhood Watch Liaison Ann Finley and the police. We urge you to join LRSCA. Visit our website <http://laurelridgeshamrock.weebly.com>, email: laurelridgeshamrock@mail.com. The more members we have, the more attention we get from the commissioners, and we're happy that the police department is listening to us and is here tonight.

Announcements from the audience: 1. There is a new Little Free Library on Blueberry Tr. Marylee Putnam also has one at the end of Hillbrook Way. 2. Property Tax Assessments: if you want to appeal, I have a contact who can help you. *[We didn't get this information from the resident who said this. If you have the contact information, please post the information to our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/694734340599699/> or send it to laurelridgeshamrock@mail.com so we can share it. Thank you!]*

Marylee: We have 2 state House representatives in our area. Renitta Shannon was with us at the town hall meeting in February. Michele Henson is here with us tonight.

Henson: represented this area since 2012. They reapportioned and did a disservice to DeKalb County. I support an independent commission to redraw the lines. We're still out here working for you even though we're not in session. I live in Stone Mountain and am very easy to contact:
www.michelehenson.com.

Ann Finley is our Neighborhood Watch liaison. We have 895 households in our area.

Ann: Main thing I do: letting you know about things going on in the neighborhood. I watch Facebook and NextDoor, and if anyone emails me, I pass that along. Encourage anyone to email me after you call 911, and I'll post on NextDoor and the Facebook page: Laurel Ridge Community Neighborhood Watch. I get

info from crimemapping.com. Anyone can look there. Set up radius of where you want to receive reports. You will get notified of crimes in that radius. When I see something there, I first post it and then say I'll get back with any more info. In the interim, Al Fowler is trying to track down more information. The quickest way to get on the listserv, send a personal email to: annfinleyrealtor@annfinley.com.

Reporting suspicious activities: If you have to decide if something is suspicious, then report it. Cars pulled in backwards under carport. Cars pulling in multiple driveways. After you call 911, get on social media with any pictures, license plate, description.

Please get to know your neighbors: people who live next door, across the street, next to them. Get their cell numbers, cars, typical schedules. Then, you know better if something is suspicious. Have a block party. If you're going to be out of town, get someone to take in your mail.

Marylee: I've been told that instead of putting vacation notices to the post office or newspaper, it may be better to have a neighbor get them for you while you're away.

Sgt. Neal from Detective Division: we have 6-8 detectives. After police report, takes 2-3 days to be assigned to a detective to follow up with you to get any additional evidence. If your home is burglarized, it is helpful to have serial numbers, photographs of items to provide detectives. Pawn shops use that serial number to verify whether items are stolen. We can recover items from pawn shops and make arrests.

I would advise to get an alarm system for your home. I've had it happen to me. I had serial numbers. I now have ring.com at my home. I can communicate with the person at the door while I'm at work. I can watch the person at the door walk away. We've gotten good evidence from ring.com.

Cut your shrubs so you don't have any blind spots for criminals to hide. Shrubs – cut to 3 feet tall. Trees – keep to 5 feet tall.

Entering autos: lock your car doors. If you leave them unlocked, criminals will remember this is a place where people don't lock doors.

We also handle fraud: SSNs, using your identity, calling seniors to tell them someone is locked up and they need you to give them cash. Something is wrong with your computer, and I need access to fix your computer. They're going to take your files. Call the police, and we'll be happy to advise you.

We handle robberies. Commercial burglaries in area – one person robbed about 8 gas stations. With video footage and TV coverage, we arrested him.

Email: jeneal@dekalbcountyga.gov. 770-724-7790 (desk). 770-724-7780 (investigative area).

We have a person in custody for the burglaries that have happened in this area. We need a victim who can identify him, and we're working to find any other suspects. The Toyota 4-door sedan. He was arrested with lots of items in the car. They go through neighborhoods looking for newspapers in the driveway, signs of someone not being home. He has been charged with felony theft by receiving. A second subject was arrested on narcotics, but we couldn't connect him to burglaries. Camera caught the license plate and the person in the vehicle, which is helpful – connecting the person who was arrested to the person who was in the car at the time of the crime. Otherwise, they can say it wasn't them in the car.

Try to get pictures with your phones. Take a picture and then call us. When the call taker asks you if you want to be contacted, please say yes, and if an officer calls you, please relay the information. We will do whatever it takes to make you feel comfortable to talk to us.

Resident: What do we do if someone tries to break in while we are in the home?

Neal: If someone kicks in your door, either leave through another door, or barricade yourself and try to hide. Don't try to be defensive or fight. If they find you, do what they instruct you to do.

Al Fowler, Public Education Specialist, North Central Precinct, DeKalb County Police: Ann is very diligent with following up with me and the detectives. If you see somebody parked across the street moving things out, call 911 unless you know that it's the neighbor.

Resident: my concern is that response time is slow.

Al: Longest response time I've seen is 12 minutes, which is not bad.

Nicole Rutland, Commander of N. Central Precinct: There is nowhere that will have a cop on every street. Sometimes it might take us longer, but it's never a waste of time to call us. How are we going to know if you don't call?

Al: NextDoor is not 911. Posting on social media is great, but you've got to pick up the phone and call 911.

Al: Criminals watch your schedules. They usually knock. If someone knocks, tell them you're not interested and to go away. They want to come back, get your TV, your laptop and your jewelry. They don't carry guns. They get guns from breaking in to houses and cars. Lock your guns up. Record your information on your items so you can report it to police. Don't store good jewelry on the box on top of the dresser. Good jewelry needs to be marked. Engrave it. You can check out an engraving tool from the library. Practice on tin cans. Find someplace in your house to hide it – not under the mattress.

Resident: Should we hide our butcher knives?

Al: No, don't need to worry about those.

Resident: What about safes?

Det. Neal: Unless they're bolted down, there is a possibility they can be stolen.

Resident: Should we leave a TV or radio on?

Al: Feasibly, leaving TV or radio on might be a deterrent. If they knock and hear something inside, it might make them go away.

Lawn equipment – lock it up. Tell lawn crews to keep equipment locked up on the truck. We get reports daily of things taken off trucks. Happened today on Pangborn.

Apprehension strategies – Ring.com, Nest – any of that is good. Ring is offering discount to Dekalb county residents.

Flocksafety.com camera system reads tags on cars that come onto the street. Can give that info to the police.

Your favorite phone number should be 911.

It's all about knowing your neighbor and watching out for each other.

Tuesday, Aug. 7 is National Night Out. Communities have big events. Police visit the event. You all should have one and let us know, we'll be there.

Resident: Should we request POAP to get patrol to come out more frequently?

AI: POAP = Patrol as often as possible. Usually request comes from Neighborhood Watch. You had them in April and May. Contact the department to request them.

Resident: We've been on alert and are watching out in the neighborhood. Should we stop people to ask them what they're doing?

AI: Don't stop anyone to confront them. Take a picture and report them to police.

Maj. Rutland, Commander of N. Central Precinct: Criminal profiling is a set of behaviors someone engages in when they're involved in crime. They're walking on the street, walk in your carport, hide in the bushes. That's criminal profiling. We're allowed to do that. There is nothing suspicious about someone walking down the street. If they're looking in cars, looking in windows, that's criminal profiling. It is good to take pictures, but be careful with that. Use your judgment. Do not approach or take pictures of individuals walking down the street.

Rutland: To answer your question about paid security: In my opinion, you don't need it. We have enough presence to serve you. Your area doesn't have the type of crime that justifies it. We have 100,000 residents in our 45-square-mile precinct. In my opinion, you don't have the crime that justifies paying \$35-\$40 an hour for an off-duty officer to be here. County requires at least \$25/hour, but you won't find anyone to do it for that. You might get a quicker response if you have someone in the area, but I don't think you need it.

Resident: I'm not opposed to paid security, but I think we need to do what we can do first.

Rutland: If you're preventing people from seeing what's in your house, you're preventing them from seeing things they want to steal. This is best turnout to a community meeting I've been to in a long time. Banding together, being aware of what's going on, knowing your neighbors and meetings like this are what will solve all these break-ins, I promise you.

You don't have to be THAT person, but if you don't call, we don't know. If they're just walking down the street, call us and let us decide if they're worth stopping to question.

Resident: there was someone trying to sell coupon books, selling cleaning products. Should we call the cops in that situation?

Rutland: if you're not interested in soliciting, post signs throughout the neighborhood. Then, call us and we can tell him to go away.

Resident: going back to engraving jewelry. Would pictures work just as well as engraving?

Rutland: it would have to be unique. You can't dispute engraving. If your diamond solitaire looks just like everyone else's, you can't prove ownership.

Resident: I do pet sitting, and I have one family ready to be out of town for a long time. Should I tell them to notify the county that they will be gone?

Rutland: Yes, please, that is one of the most common reasons for POAP request. Call Al Fowler 770-724-7616.

Rutland: Last year, in county, we had 84 traffic fatalities. That was up by 20. This year, we've had 37 already. 40% of crashes, people were not wearing seatbelts. If they were wearing them, they would be alive. I cannot stress this enough, you stand a much better chance of living. Kids must be in car seats.

Hands-free law: July 1, if I see you holding a phone while you're driving, you're getting stopped and getting a ticket. There is no way to fight it.

Resident: People are cutting through our neighborhood when N. Druid Hills traffic is backed up. Willivee and Shetland, Wilson Woods.

Resident: On Leafmore, they have a sign that says you can't use it as a cut-through.

Rutland: You would need to contact Traffic Engineering Department to evaluate. As big as this neighborhood is, they would probably say no.

Resident: We don't mind the traffic, it's the speeding. The front of my house is like 285.

Rutland: we have to give you 11 miles over the speed limit unless they're in a school zone.

Resident: I can't get out of my driveway from 4-6 p.m.

Resident: It's the people that just blow through the stop signs.

Rutland: Rolling through and blowing through are the same thing. I can write you a ticket for failing to come to a complete stop.

Marylee: Notes from tonight will be posted. Give us your email so we can be in touch with you. If we want to do a POAP, we can coordinate that with Neighborhood Watch. Get to know your neighbors!

Resident: Do solicitors need a permit to solicit?

Rutland: Yes. Ask them for their permit.

Resident: We've become more conscious about crime because of social media, but is it actually picking up?

Rutland: I don't think so. We've gone through a stretch, and it will probably calm down. Prosecutor is looking at going after criminals more vigorously.

Resident: are people who get arrested less likely to come back to that neighborhood?

Rutland: if you're an easy target, they would probably come back.

Resident: Are burglaries ever violent?

Rutland: Burglaries are generally non-confrontational. Home invasions are more violent, and they're usually drug-related.

Resident: how do you make your home look less inviting when you're not there?

Rutland: motion detector lights are great. I close blinds in front of house. I don't believe in monitored alarms – they call you first, ask for your code, then they call 911 and get put into a queue of other alarm calls. Officer doesn't get deployed for several minutes, and burglars have gotten in and out in that time. You are throwing away money. I have an audible alarm at my house – my neighbors hear it and also would call 911, and I get a notification on my phone. Big dogs and audible alarms are the best deterrents.

Marylee: Thank you, everyone, for attending tonight. We will research our options and get back to you.

We have free yard signs available to tell people to "Slow Down." They were donated to our neighborhood by Abbadabbas and PEDS. If you are interested in getting one, or would like to report a road safety concern (including speeding and rolling through stop signs), please contact Whitney McGinniss at (404) 904-1254 or wlmcginniss@gmail.com.

Det. Woodburn & Det. Thompson also attended the meeting.

A big thank you to Ann Finley for coordinating tonight's meeting!