

Wendell Evans—Sentenced for Robbing Older Adult Women

It was a case that drew the attention of all who attended a Seventh District Crime and Safety meeting about a year ago. Older women who were shopping at local Sentry Stores were being targeted, followed home and robbed as they juggled groceries and keys as they opened their door. Mr. Evans would approach them as they were distracted; he forced them into the house, locked them in a closet or knocked them down and then burglarized the home.

All six of the women were injured. One of the victims has lost the use of her arm, had to move from the neighborhood to a residential living facility and sell her home.

After the meeting, Captain Jessup met with one of the victims, learned more about the details of the seven crimes (she was attacked twice) and made the decision to put a special detail of officers on this case. They spent time in the stores watching for an individual who roamed the stores following older adult women and not shopping.

A man was targeted who was seen at both Sentry Stores. Officers posed as “baggers”; a female officer dressed as an elderly woman shopping and then checking out and appeared to head home. As Mr. Evans started to follow the woman, the officers who were the baggers and other officers followed him. They all ended up at a vacant home as Mr. Evans tried to accost the female officer who was the decoy.

It was a remarkable use of police resources which earned a commendation from Chief Flynn for all involved. After the case was laid out for Mr. Evans and his attorney, he decided to plead guilty.

As we have mentioned in other articles in this paper, too often residents at Crime and Safety Meetings hear of these stories and go home upset and feeling vulnerable. The Block Watch Council decided to work with the DA’s office to design a program where everyone who regularly attends Seventh District Crime and Safety meetings could learn about the justice system and how the courts work. The Seven District Court Watch was formed!

Residents who care about their community started to understand the system, are able to tour the court house, meet the Chief Justice and talk about their concerns and ultimately start to write Community Impact Statements. To-date, there have been 7 courthouse tours, a task force formed of involved residents who have picked out 8 cases to monitor; 6 cases have progressed through the courts.

Community Impact Statements for all these cases have been submitted to judges; Assistant District Attorney Nicole Sheldon has related how each judge has shared the comments of citizens with individuals as they were sentenced. They were appreciative of the thoughtfulness that went into each of the statements.

In Mr. Evans case, statements came from block watch captains, store employees, and residents. The victims were allowed to speak at the sentencing. Mr. Evans was ultimately sentenced to 44 years in prison (34 years confinement, 10 years supervision). This sentence is to begin once he is finished serving a 13 year prison term that he is currently serving. The judge ordered this sentence be served consecutive to any other sentence, including that 13 year sentence.

Mr. Evans is 48 years of age, so combining the 2 sentences; he will be eligible for release when he is 95 years old. I was struck by a comment from the Judge. He reminded the two District Attorneys that in essence, this was a life sentence for this man.