
Disturbances in Crestlake

Posted by Anthony Weck - 03/31/2009 12:16pm

During the summer of 2008 I began to experience problems with my doorbell being rung late at night. Knowing that no one with whom I am acquainted ever comes unexpectedly to the house at 9:00 or 10:00 at night, and seeing that no one was ever at the door whenever the doorbell rang, I assumed it simply to be neighborhood children playing pranks. I understand this will happen from time to time where kids are involved so at first I ignored the problem. As its frequency increased, however, it soon became intolerable and I discovered, at length, who was responsible.

As we are all aware, there are many families with children who call Crestlake home and it is not this, in and of itself, with which I take issue. However, a particular house across the street from my residence seemed last summer to be a place of congregation for children who look to be about 12 to 14 years of age. These children were often out late at night with no parental supervision, which only invites the trouble which eventually ensued. It was indeed one of these children who were ringing my doorbell, as one night after it had been rung not once but twice, I turned on the porch light and stepped out onto the front porch. I saw a group of children malingering about in the open garage doorway of the house across the street. As soon as the children saw me with my porch light on, they scattered. One of them, probably the culprit, kept looking out from around the opposite side of the garage doorway to see if I was still there. In my experience, innocent people do not behave this way.

I proceeded to walk over to the house in question and have a word with the lady of the house. I was calm and polite in explaining the issue and she was apologetic, assuring me that it would not happen again. It has since come to my attention that the married couple and parents who resided the house divorced in late October 2008. It appears that the mother has left the house and has custody of the child, with the father receiving weekend visits. The point here is that since the child has been removed from full-time residency at the house, my doorbell has not been surreptitiously rung since that time, nor have I noticed groups of children gathering at that house after dark... that is until the night of Saturday, March 21st, 2009. At about 9:00, after a busy day, the doorbell rang. I went to the door and of course no one was there. As I do not believe my house or property to be the subject of supernatural activity, I turned on the porch light, stepped out onto the front porch and saw the same child with whom I had had issue the previous summer! He stood at the southwest corner of what is now apparently his father's house, facing the vacant house across the street from it. He looked over his shoulder periodically, probably to see if I was still standing there glaring at him. (I was.) Then my attention was drawn to the vacant house. A group of children were standing on the sidewalk in front of it hurling rocks at it. Once again, it was obvious that no parental supervision was present where it was very clearly needed.

This time I didn't bother going over to the house in question to speak with the father... mostly because it appeared that he had left the child home alone and to his own devices. Instead, I called the Champaign County Sherriff's office. A patrol car was dispatched and arrived at my house a few minutes later. I explained to both deputies who responded what had transpired the previous summer as well as what had happened that night. (I was hardly surprised when one of the deputies informed me that his own son goes to school with "Little Mr. Ring-and-Run". He said that his son has pointed this boy out to him in the past, saying that he is a "troublemaker at school".) Both deputies proceeded to search the area; of course all the children had by this time disappeared. The deputies said that no one appeared to be home at the residence of "The Doorbell Bandit", although as I was speaking to them, I saw a light go out inside the house. This led me to believe that the boy was inside and, having seen the patrol car sitting outside, was hiding. They also said that there appeared to be no damage to the aforementioned vacant house. I am sure this would come as a relief to whoever owns it and sees that it is kept well. Basically, though, I was advised by the deputies to call them if the problem recurred. I will most certainly do so!

To be importuned by a juvenile prankster ringing my doorbell at night is bad enough, but seeing a group of what could only be described as delinquents throwing rocks at someone's house made me wonder about any other houses at which they had been throwing rocks, including my own. With that thought, a memory suddenly occurred to me: I remembered finding random rocks in my driveway and in my front yard last summer! To invoke a bit of sarcasm, I wonder who put those rocks there... While the above constitutes the bulk of my experiences, I have a feeling I'm not alone.

Though St. Joseph is, on the whole, a safe place to live and a good place to raise a family, I assert that it is nonetheless an exercise in bad parental judgment to allow children to be out roaming the neighborhood at night. This is not to say that all children in the neighborhood are given to misbehavior. Likewise, it is also not to say that all parents in the neighborhood are remiss in their duties. It is to say, however, that the responsibility of preventing – and correcting – misbehavior which immediately affects other Crestlake residents is completely incumbent upon the parents. For parents to exercise that responsibility, they must, of course, be present and be watchful. If the parents are at work or have some other bona fide reason for being absent, then they should make arrangements for proper child care. And while I do agree that motorists bear a certain degree of responsibility with regards to pedestrians, the placement of bright yellow "SLOW" signs at the end of one's driveway, as I've seen some parents in the neighborhood do, is not enough.

I do not have children of my own and I do not appreciate other people asking me to watch out for theirs. Moreover, I am absolutely incensed by the fact that some parents in Crestlake show such utter disregard for the rights of their neighbors by allowing their children the run of the streets completely unsupervised, especially late at night. Again, this only invites

trouble and is akin to said parents giving their children permission to trespass and to vandalize under the cover of darkness should to urge to do so strike them. (Sounds rather criminal when put that way, doesn't it?) Furthermore, it rankles me to no end that I am obliged to pay shockingly high property taxes, which seem to increase each year, and to have the vast majority of those tax dollars spent so that everyone else's children can go to St. Joseph schools. On top of that, it is my understanding that part of the homeowners association dues I am obliged to pay annually goes toward a Halloween party and parade for neighborhood children. As I see it, I'm involuntarily helping to fund a party for everyone else's kids, which I feel is a gross misappropriation of funds. Then to have some of those same children trespass upon my property, interrupt the peace and quiet of my home, and vandalize or attempt to vandalize my house (and others) is a disgrace and an outrage! I would find the reality of paying those property taxes and association dues much more palatable were it not for the aforesaid.

I write these presents not to incite animosity between myself and my neighbors but rather to make my neighbors aware of what I have observed and experienced. I thought this especially relevant given the proposal in the most recent Crestlake Homeowners Association newsletter of the inception of a neighborhood watch program. I do not imagine nor would I ever expect the children of the neighborhood to stop playing outdoors or to stop socializing with their peers. I would, however, expect the parents of Crestlake to have some consideration for their neighbors when allowing their children to run free. In that vein, I would appeal to those parents to instruct their children, as they should already be doing, that it is not acceptable to cut through other people's yards, to treat the property of others as public playgrounds, to ring the doorbells of strangers and then run, or to throw rocks at or onto the property of others. I would ask those same parents to admonish their children that there will be consequences if such unacceptable activity is reported, and to follow through with those consequences should the need arise. For I am certain that most if not all parents in the subdivision would find it preferable to effect discipline themselves rather than to have it meted out by the police and become a matter of permanent public record.

Remember:

Cutting across the property of someone you do not know is not "taking a shortcut". It is trespassing.

Going up to the house of someone you do not know and ringing the doorbell with no intention of addressing that person is not a "harmless prank". It is disturbing the peace. It is harassment if done repeatedly. And it is trespassing.

Throwing rocks at someone's house, whether or not that house is currently occupied, is not "just kids being kids". It is attempted vandalism and/or vandalism. It is attempted or willful destruction of private property. It is harassment if done repeatedly. And if one sets foot on the property, it is criminal trespassing.

All of the above are punishable by law.

All of the above are a serious detriment to the Crestlake subdivision.

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Re:Disturbances in Crestlake

Posted by Robin Gray - 04/08/2009 08:50am

Wow!! I tried my best to not respond to your concerns but I can't seem to get past it. First of all I agree with most of your issues. Parents should be more aware of their childrens activities. Door bell ringing and throwing rocks, ect,is totally unacceptable. I do take exception with your comments about looking out for our children. I have seen many motorist driving at speeds that well exceed the speed limit. Your assumption that it is not your responsibility to look out for children is absurd. Do you think that if a child runs out in front of your vehicle and you hit the child,you are not to blame because the parents did not take enough care??? I believe you should retake Driving 101. Our community is based on family values. We our proud of our children. Of course there are times when problems arise, as I am sure they did when you were a child. Perhaps you should have investigate St. Joe and the community before electing to reside here. Almost sounds like you should have chosen ad deserted island to call your home.

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Re:Disturbances in Crestlake

Posted by Anthony Weck - 06/15/2009 11:51pm

A Response to Robin Gray's Last Posting in this Thread:

Dear Robin:

As can be seen I have not viewed the Crestlake Homeowners Association forum for some time but I noticed that you had written a response to my initial posting; it appears that my message left you with some questions and so I wish to clarify a few things.

It is nice to know that I am not the only resident who is concerned about some of the goings-on in our neighborhood. In your response to my initial message, you set forth the following question:

"Do you think that if a child runs out in front of your vehicle and you hit the child, you are not to blame because the parents did not take enough care?"

The answer to that question is, quite simply, no. Judging by your response, you seem to have surmised that I disclaim all responsibility for the safety of pedestrians, particularly children at play, when I am behind the wheel of a car. If that is the case, I would like to make it very clear that I do not feel that way at all. I certainly do not think that if a motorist were to collide with someone's child who has erred into the street that said motorist is not at fault simply because the parent(s) did not take sufficient care. This was not even the main idea of the entire posting. Since the question has arisen, though, I assert my agreement that in such a situation, hypothetical as it may be, the motorist would bear most of the responsibility. I am well acquainted with Illinois traffic laws, including but not limited to that which states that pedestrians have the right of way. In that regard, if you will recall, I wrote the following:

"And while I agree that motorists bear a certain degree of responsibility with regards to pedestrians, the placement of bright yellow "SLOW" signs at the end of one's driveway... is not enough."

Because the simple fact is that children will sometimes run into the street, I would agree that motorists in a community such as ours should be watchful at all times. My point was that while motorists bear a degree of responsibility so obviously great that it hardly bears mentioning, a certain degree of responsibility also falls upon the parents to see to the safety of their children. From your response, I am led to believe that my comment about the "SLOW" signs particularly caught your attention. Maybe to some people these signs project a clear and simple message of, "We care about the safety of our kids..." (and I'm sure "we" do). Conversely, though, they also seem to append to the foregoing message the following phrase: "...so we're going to put these signs out by the street and hope for the best."

It seems that we both agree that speeding is something of a problem in our neighborhood. I cannot attest to the driving habits of others but what I can promise you is that my vehicle is not one of those which you have observed speeding. Not that any justification is necessary, but when I am driving anywhere in St. Joseph I am careful to observe the speed limit at all times. I also come to a complete stop at every stop sign, probably much to the chagrin of the cars behind me. One of the primary reasons I do these things is that I am aware that a child could dart out into the street at any time. This simply happens from time to time and therefore I am always watchful when behind the wheel. I hope this provides you with some comfort.

There are few things in life at which I will come right out and say that I am truly adept but driving a motor vehicle is one of those things. Please be assured that I was indeed enrolled in "Driving 101" when I was in high school and that I passed the course with flying colors. In the numerous years that have elapsed since then, I continue to enjoy an accident-free driving record. This would indicate that most if not all skills I learned in "Driving 101" have been retained. Therefore, your suggestion of a remedial course in the same is unfounded. In addition, though I could easily produce a witty come-back based on the vast majority of your response, I do not wish to engage in an exchange of insults. To do so would be impolite and extremely juvenile, not to mention contrary to the regulations of this forum. I will therefore respond to this point no further.

What seems to have stood out most to you, however, is my statement:

"I do not have children of my own and I do not appreciate other people asking me to watch out for theirs."

Perhaps this statement was poorly placed, as it was made directly after discussing the aforementioned "SLOW" signs. The point I was trying to convey was that I do not appreciate having to be on the lookout in a seemingly constant fashion for other people's children who might be up to no good. In allowing their children the run of the streets, especially after sunset, the parents who do so are in essence asking me to see that their children stay out of trouble, at least as far as my home and property are concerned. (Of course, if I see someone else's house being vandalized, as I have in the past, I will certainly report it to the authorities... as I have in the past.) On that note, it probably bears restating at this juncture yet another previous point:

"This is not to say that all children in the neighborhood are given to misbehavior. Likewise, it is also not to say that all parents in the neighborhood are remiss in their duties."

I think it's great that you (and others) are proud of your children. Just the fact that you are reading and responding to this forum suggests that you are a concerned, responsible citizen and a concerned, responsible parent, one who likely has

every reason to be proud of his or her children. So to summarize, upon reviewing what I wrote, I can see how my statement about watching out for other people's children could have been misleading and I offer my apologies.

Lastly, I would like to respond to your suggestion that an investigation into the community should have been undertaken before making St. Joseph my home. While it is impertinent, I will ignore that aspect of the suggestion and reply that much investigation was made into the character of the community as a whole and into the Crestlake neighborhood before relocating from my previous place of residence. The idea of a small, quiet town was then and still is appealing. I am not new to the neighborhood. Indeed, I have resided in my particular area of Crestlake longer than the majority of my surrounding neighbors. When I first moved in, the problems about which I have written were miniscule to nonexistent. That, unfortunately, seems to have changed and was the crux of my previous posting. I am sorry if that was unclear.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your response and for your input. Communication between neighbors is what makes a group of houses into a neighborhood and a bunch of people living next door to each other into neighbors. I wish you and your family good health and prosperity.

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