

Information helps combat carjacking trend

In February, an armed juvenile jumped into a car in the 17500 block of Dixie Highway, ordered the occupant to exit the vehicle, then he and an accomplice drove away.

On May 16, a similar scenario played out across town in the 17900 block of Halsted St.

In both cases, the theft occurred in broad daylight. In both cases, the perpetrators were soon apprehended. In the second case, one of the suspects was shot by an Indiana trooper at the end of a pursuit after allegedly displaying a handgun.

Incidents like these are happening

VIEWPOINT



Eric Crump
Columnist

with increasing frequency in Chicagoland, especially on the West Side of Chicago and in the Western Suburbs, according to the Cook County Sheriff's Department. The South Suburbs are not immune from the scourge. Local law enforcement and the sheriff's department are working to address the problem and to educate drivers about how to avoid becoming victims of carjackers.

The Homewood Police Department posted a list of tips on its Facebook page shortly after the May incident.

In April, the sheriff's department held a carjacking seminar in Tinley Park.

Sheriff's Department Senior Project Manager Roe Conn told the audience that the situations like what happened in Homewood are fairly typical, although he sought to downplay the idea that juveniles commit carjackings to go on joyrides or as part of social media stunts. That happens, he said, but in most cases, juveniles are working with adults who are pros at car thefts.

Stolen cars are often obtained in order to be used in committing other crimes, he said, and carjacking happens to be the fastest and least complicated method of obtaining vehicles.

Juveniles represent almost half the carjacking arrests because the pros use them as drivers. Soon after the theft, they will stop and change drivers, putting a juvenile behind the wheel of the stolen car because they are less likely to go to jail if caught, Conn said.

It's all part of a well-honed strategy.

"In the world of carjacking, this is their job. They know what they're doing. They know what the rules are. They know what the laws are. They're very aware of their surroundings. You need to be as aware of your surroundings and also understand their mindset

CARJACKING SAFETY ADVICE

- Stay aware of your surroundings
- Don't be distracted by cellphones when parked.
- Keep your doors locked when driving.
- Most carjacking's occur when exiting or entering your vehicle.
- Avoid sitting in your vehicle for an extended length of time.
- If you see something suspicious call 9-1-1.

Carjacking prevention tips posted on the Homewood Police Department's Facebook page in May.

as best you can," he said.

Conn recommended that drivers consider registering their vehicles with the sheriff's department, because that can speed up tracking and improve the chances of recovering a stolen vehicle. The form can be found at bit.ly/sheriff-auto-tracking.

Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart announced in April his support for bills in the Illinois legislature that would require auto manufacturers to provide more information about the tracking capabilities of cars they make. Conn explained that being able to track stolen vehicles is a powerful tool for law enforcement in the battle against carjackers.

New Chronicle website launches

The Chronicle launched a new website design at hfchronicle.com along with a new subscription system on May 11.

We think the new site will be easier to read and the subscription system easier to navigate. Of course, there will always be little glitches now and then. We've had a few, but I think most have been solved pretty quickly.

We'd love to hear from you. Your experiences or suggestions that will help us improve the site. If it doesn't work for readers, it doesn't work.

We also encourage everyone to subscribe. Even though the Chronicle is technically a for-profit company, we like NPR's model of depending more on readers than on other sources of revenue. We hope to earn more reader support because that enables us to provide readers with better, broader and more in-depth coverage of the news and issues that interest you.

When you subscribe, you're not only getting full access to daily local news

stories, you're helping your local newspaper grow and improve.

To help, and in defiance of the roaring beast of inflation that is menacing the economy, we've lowered the price of a monthly subscription by more than 10%, from \$8.99 to \$7.99.

That won't tame the beast, but we hope it will help a few more people join the Reporter Supporter Club.

Let's all celebrate Juneteenth

I encourage everybody to attend the Homewood-Flossmoor Juneteenth parade and festival on June 19. Last year's event was packed with fun activities, great performances, many vendors and some educational opportunities in the mix. (See our story on page 8.)

You Matter 2 plans to build on the success of the first local festival, so you won't want to miss it.

It's also a way to celebrate an historical moment that is as important to the nation's development as Independence Day.

In fact, Juneteenth recognizes the first time independence was available to all the people of the nation. Even though there was still, and is still, a long hard road to arriving at full equality and freedom for all, Juneteenth represents the moment the nation turned a corner from the practice of slavery and started heading toward achieving the values expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

We might not have arrived at the full realization of those values, and we might never get there, but a full-throated, joyous celebration of emancipation seems like a good way to keep heading in the right direction.

Juneteenth is our second Independence Day. Let's celebrate!

HOMWOOD-FLOSSMOOR CHRONICLE

About us:

The Homewood-Flossmoor Chronicle was launched in July 2014. The editors, with help from a number of community members and paid staff, are volunteering their time and talents to bring the latest news to residents of Homewood and Flossmoor.

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