



Winter 2009

**FROM THE OFFICE OF  
SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR  
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH**

# THE SENIOR NEWS

## ARE WE SAFE ANYWHERE?

“Woman fends off elevator robbery,” “Woman robbed while loading groceries,” “Police praise man as hero for pursuing purse snatcher.” It seems in these hard economic times, we are seeing more of these awful headlines.

A woman was robbed on her lunch hour in downtown Akron standing beside her car. Robbers have become so desperate that the time of day doesn't matter anymore.

**Below are specific ways to minimize your chances of being targeted by a criminal:**

**Always pay attention and make it obvious that you are paying attention.**

Watch for cars that drive past you several times or people who walk past you and turn around. If you think you are being followed, do not ignore that instinct. Return to the store for an escort if you have just left a store or go to the nearest public place for safety.

**Always walk with your head looking to the left, to the right, and behind you even if you are with another person.**

Practice this way of walking and do it regularly, even if you are walking in a public place in broad daylight. You may feel silly walking this way and you may appear to be paranoid since you are looking around so much. But think about this: A criminal is looking to steal a purse and he sees two different women. One woman is walking with her head down and not paying attention. The other woman is looking around the entire time she is walking. Who is the criminal going to steal the purse from? Of course, he will choose the woman who is looking down and will be surprised. He won't choose the woman who is looking all around and will see him coming.

**Pay just as much attention during the daylight as you would during the night.**

Most of us tend to be concerned and pay attention when we are walking alone at night but are not concerned and pay less attention when walking alone during the day. Many crimes are committed in public places in broad daylight. Criminals will often target their victims during the day because there are so many people to choose from who are not paying attention.

### WHO IS PREPARING YOUR TAXES?

As tax season is upon us, make sure you get a reputable person to prepare your taxes.

According to the Better Business Bureau, look for these most common signs of fraudulent tax preparation:

1. Preparer claiming they can obtain a larger refund than other preparers.
2. Basing their fee on a percentage of the amount of the refund. Fees should be based on the complexity of the return, never on the size of the tax savings or refund.
3. Claiming they can get you immediate payment of your return. Keep in mind that this is a loan. Fraudulent tax preparers often pad their pockets by giving cash up front at a high interest rate while presenting it as an instant refund from the federal government.
4. Refusing to sign the tax return or provide the taxpayer a copy for his or her records. Always make sure you have something in hand that shows proof of what transpired and you should have a receipt for services rendered.

**Visit our Senior Safety website:**

[www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/srcitsafe.htm](http://www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/srcitsafe.htm)

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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PROSECUTOR



Prosecutor Walsh was sworn in for her third term in office beginning January 5, 2009 by Judge Carol Dezso. Holding the bible was Prosecutor Walsh's Employee of the Year, Mark Anderson.

## CASES INVOLVING SENIOR CITIZENS



On December 15, 2008, **Carolyn Vallen, 60, of Beckley Road in Stow, was sentenced to three years in prison** for stealing money from her client's accounts.

Vallen was a home healthcare giver for an 80-year-old woman. She stole approximately \$123,000 from the victim. Vallen would use the victim's ATM card to withdraw money, write checks to herself from the victim's checking account, and sold the victim a used electric wheelchair for an exorbitant amount of money.

Vallen worked for a privately-owned home healthcare company in Cuyahoga Falls and provided care to the victim. She also continued to take care of the victim when she moved into a nursing

home in Stow. As part of Vallen's job, she was to help the victim pay her bills. Vallen was also entrusted with using the victim's ATM card to make purchases for the victim. The victim's money was stolen out of her account by Vallen while she was running errands for her. A total of 57 personal checks were stolen and forged.

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On March 28, 2008, **Jerry Lewis, 45, of Springdale in Akron was sentenced to three years in prison** and ordered to pay \$1,000 in restitution to his victim. Lewis had a prior relationship with the Victim's daughter that ended with a protection order against Lewis. Lewis followed the victim and her daughter as they were driving to church. While the victims were entering the church, Lewis threw bricks at victim's car breaking out the side mirror and putting a dent in the side of the car.

Lewis had an active protection order against him, two prior domestic violence convictions and one prior violation of a protection order against him. As part of his plea agreement, Lewis is to pay the victim \$1,000 to cover the cost of the repairs to her car.

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On June 16, 2008, **Kenneth Keith, 41, of Hammel Street, Akron, was sentenced to 4 years prison** for breaking into an elderly man's house and robbing him. Keith went to victim's home and asked if he needed his snow shoveled. The 83-year-old victim opened his door and said 'no.' Keith then pushed his way in, knocked victim to the ground and pushed him down a set of steps. Keith threw the victim's cane down the steps, went into victim's pocket and removed \$20 from his wallet. Defendant told him he would pay him back. The victim was very shaken and upset. He didn't immediately tell anyone what happened. He told his caretaker a few days later who immediately notified police.