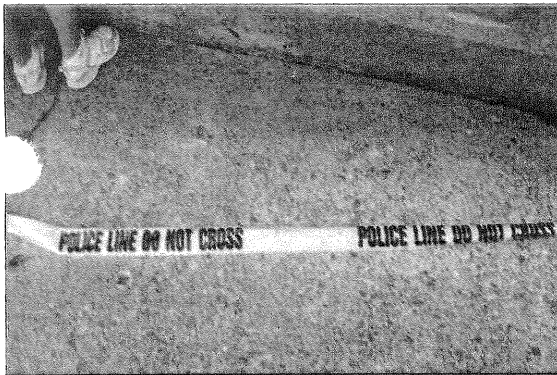


Protect Yourself From Crime

**By: Sherri Bevan Walsh,
Summit County Prosecutor**

Dear Readers:

I am pleased to introduce a new monthly column, which I hope will be a great benefit to all the readers of *The Summit County Women's Journal: Protecting Yourself From Crime*. This column will provide tips on how you can minimize your chances of becoming a victim of crime, practical advice on protecting yourself from crimes such as assaults, purse snatchings, burglaries, car jackings, and con artist scams, and other information about crimes being committed in our community.



As the Summit County Prosecutor, I am very much aware of all the crimes being committed in our communities. We all read articles in the newspaper about crime and hear stories on the television news programs. However, the crimes you read about and hear about on television represent only a very small number of the total number of crimes being committed. Last year, my office prosecuted to conclusion 4,895 adult defendants who committed felony crimes in Summit County. Felony crimes are the most serious crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, drug offenses,

child abuse and burglary. My office also prosecuted over 7,000 juveniles for offenses ranging from the less serious misdemeanor crimes to the most serious felony crimes. And most of the over 10,000 individuals prosecuted by my office were charged with more than one crime.

Crime can affect all of us, regardless of our gender, our age, our race, or where we live. It is important to realize and accept that none of us are immune from becoming a victim of a crime. I realized this myself on February 21, 1986, when I became the 11th of 13 women who was attacked in broad daylight by a serial

rapist in Akron. I was luckier than many of the other women as I was able to fight off my attacker and my injuries were minor. Although this occurred 16 years ago, it is an experience I have never forgotten and often share with other people with the hope of providing valuable advice.

On the day of my attack, I was cleaning snow off my car at 8:30 in the morning. My car was parked on the street and I observed a suspicious man pass by me on the sidewalk. I had a gut feeling that something about him wasn't right so I watched him for a few minutes but then decided since it was

daylight and I was in a public area, there was no need to worry. Shortly thereafter, I got into my car and did not lock my door. Within seconds, my car door opened and this same man grabbed my throat and began choking me. I immediately reacted by hitting him, kicking him, and screaming as loud as I could. I made such a commotion that after a few minutes, he panicked and ran away.

I learned several things from this experience, which I will share with you:

Rehearse a plan in your mind where you tell yourself what you will do if something like this ever happens to you. I had thought about this possibility before I was ever attacked and because I had a plan, I was able to react quickly. There is no time to think when something like this occurs and if you have never thought about it, you are less likely to react.

If you are in a public place where other people are likely to hear you, scream as loud as you can and do anything you can to draw attention to the situation. Criminals do not want to get caught and most will panic if you are making a lot of noise.

If you have a gut feeling that someone or something is not quite right, do not ignore that gut feeling because your instinct is probably right. Most victims of crime have told me that they had a bad feeling about the criminal and wish they had not ignored their instinct.

Do not assume you are safe just because it is daylight and you are in a public place. There are almost as many crimes committed during the day as there are crimes committed at night.

Always lock your car door.

After my attack, I blamed myself for the incident for not being more careful or cautious. I now know that self-blame is a very normal reaction for those who have been a victim of crime. Although most victims continue to blame themselves, they are NOT to blame. The criminal is to blame. However, because we live in a society where crime continues to occur, we must do everything possible to minimize our

chances of becoming the next crime victim.

If you have any questions or suggestions for future topics, please call or write to:

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PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

Sherri Bevan Walsh was elected Summit County Prosecutor on November 7, 2000, and began her four-year term of office on January 1, 2001. On November 2, 2004, she was re-elected to her second term to begin on January 1, 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1982 from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and attended law school at Capital University School of Law where she received her law degree in 1985.



Sherri Bevan Walsh has been an attorney in the Summit County area for the past 21 years. She was previously employed as an Assistant City Prosecutor and Police Legal Advisor for the City of Akron. She was also a partner in the law firm of Bevan & Associates and served for many years as the Court Magistrate for the Village of Boston Heights, Village of Northfield and Village of Peninsula.

Ms. Walsh is committed to protecting the rights of those who are victims of crime in our community. She has received numerous awards for her exceptional commitment to crime victims and the many positive programs her office has been providing to our community.

In her position as Prosecutor, her goal is to aggressively prosecute criminals and ensure that victims receive support and assistance throughout the criminal justice proceedings. The criminal division in her office prosecutes approximately 5,000 defendants each year who commit felony crimes in Summit County, with a conviction rate of 96%.

Ms. Walsh resides in Hudson with her husband, Patrick Walsh, and their two sons.