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## Calling 911

*By Sophie Braccini*

Two home burglaries in Moraga in March and April serve as reminders that, although the town remains one of the safest in the county, it is not crime-free. The first incident happened at night, in the home of an older resident, and is still under investigation. The other took place during the day—a suspect was arrested on unrelated charges. Moraga police recently talked about these crimes and what residents can do to stay safe.

"Most of the time, burglars want to enter homes while owners are away during the day. They don't want to be seen. It's a good idea to keep the doors locked and if you see someone, make noise," advised Detective Will Davis.

At about 10 a.m. on April 12, a Tharp Drive resident was at home when she spotted a stranger in her backyard. She saw him walk around the house and heard him try to enter through a back window. She called 911 and exited her house through the garage. A nearby mail carrier stayed with her while she waited for police to arrive.

"We surrounded the house and used a Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office K9 to track the suspect," said Lieutenant Jeff Price. "Nobody was in the garden or had entered the home. The dog picked up a scent and we followed the foot tracks over a fence, but the trail was lost."

Later that day, a security guard at Sanders Ranch spotted a suspicious person walking down Camino Pablo and called police. "We finger-printed him and arrested him on unrelated charges," said Price, who could not divulge the details of an open investigation.

A few weeks earlier Shirley Lawrence, an elderly Moraga resident, was awakened in the middle of the night by sounds in the home she has lived in for 47 years. At first she thought she was dreaming, she recalls, but then she heard the sounds again and knew someone was there. "I got really scared," she said. "They knew I was there, locked in my bedroom, because my dog was coughing. I took my cell phone and called 911."

Lawrence reports that the police were there within minutes. "We are so lucky to have our own police department," she said. "They are the most marvelous people and I've called them many times to thank them."

Nothing was stolen, but the backdoor had been broken. Lawrence believes that the burglars were after drugs and couldn't find any in her home.

"If a house looks like it is not inhabited, then people might attempt to enter at night," said Davis.

Both Davis and Price say that the best way to get help in an emergency is to dial 911 from a landline. "The moment you enter that second 'one' your address appears on the screen of the dispatcher in Martinez with whom we contract services," explained Price, who advises residents to call (925) 284-5010 from a cell phone to reach the emergency dispatcher. "That might be your best option if you can't use a landline," he said.

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