

## 31<sup>st</sup> Annual National Night Out In Woodlake, Emphasis on Home Security and Fire Prevention.



This was the 5<sup>th</sup> year the Woodlake community has celebrated the annual National Neighborhood Night Out. The festivities began at 6 p.m. on the evening of October 7<sup>th</sup>. The duo of Mike and Angela Mahler of *Wild Horses*, set the mood and got the event started with a selection from “The Eagles”; *Heartache Tonight*. Erstwhile, the SVFD ladies readied the service line with the BBQ brisket complemented with potato salad and baked beans for the growing line of hungry attendees.

The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator, Howard Swaim, took the mike to make some introductory remarks, welcomed visitors and residents, and expressed appreciation to Nancy Geary, Debbie King, and Teresa Reese whom without their help, this year’s event may not have happened. A special thanks and recognition was made to Chief Taylor and department president, Pat Beard in organizing the Sparta Volunteer Fire Department squad’s participation and preparing the food for the event. We were gratified that Cpl. Nichols, Bell County Sheriff’s Department Deputy, was able take some time from his duties to attend.

Mr. Swaim continued, “Given the growing number of approximately 2500 Sparta Valley households, the sudden up-surge in the ‘crimes-of-opportunity’ by nearly 50% of **Burglary From a Vehicle, Vehicle Theft** and **Robbery**, despite a drop by 10% of the crimes of **Theft, Felony Theft** and **Burglary of a Residence**, is a disturbing trend.”

A mock ‘pop-quiz’ was administered to pique the group’s awareness that crime prevention is a daily, around-the-clock endeavor because “Criminals never get a break or ever take a day-off”.

An example of the *Emergency First Aid Handbook* that everyone received with their announcements was viewed to remind the residents to take one of the *Risk Assessment Workbooks* for themselves and one for their absent neighbor before leaving.

Following a brief moment of silence to honor the fallen-in-the-line-of-duty First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers, the festivities were resumed and the “feeding frenzy” commenced.

This keynote feature of the evening was a static demonstration of the SVFD fire engine - lights, sirens and bells, and a live, timed-and-evaluated junior firefighter readiness-exercise to engage a fire in full ingress protective garb and gear. The randomly selected, put-on-the-spot crew donned their assigned protective covering and enabled their respirators within the allotted time and, despite resisting taunts from the gallery to dance to the music provided by *Wild Horses*, the exercise was a success.

The evening concluded with an inspiring rendition of “The Hokey Pokey” and “Jesus Loves Me” from an impromptu kids choir that Mike and Angela accompanied.

With gratitude to: Bill & Debbie King,  
Mike & Nancy Geary,  
Robin & Teresa Reese,  
And to Tom Kirwan; the behind-the-scene stage manager who tended to ancillary, often unnoticed necessities like traffic control & barriers, power cords, trash containers and disposal, extra tables and chairs, and Public Relations through photos and communications.

A special thanks to: Cpl. (Bell County Deputy Sheriff) Nichols,  
SVFD President, Pat Beard,  
Chief Taylor and the SVFD Firefighters and their families,  
And Mike and Angela Mahler of “Wild Horses”.