

Cameras OK; crime watches are better

June 19, 2010

Surveillance cameras have become so common that many have become unaware of them.

Cameras are in banks, grocery stores, convenience stores and gas stations. They are in casinos, government buildings, parking lots, along interstate highways and even around people's homes.

With a search of the Web, one can see what's happening outside Wrigley Field in Chicago, gaze across the battlefield in Gettysburg, Pa., or view up-to-date snapshots from cities across the globe.

The suggestion of putting surveillance cameras in three Lafayette parks has many saying the move would be Orwellian or a government invasion of privacy. But courts have ruled that one does not have the expectation of privacy in public places.

Others have no problem with surveillance cameras in parks because the proposal would use a \$80,000 grant to put cameras in three spots -- Riehle Plaza, Hanna Center and Columbian Park -- to monitor activity.

Tippecanoe Emergency Management Agency Director Mark Kirby told Journal & Courier reporter Dorothy Schneider that the camera images would not be available by those searching the Internet for Web cams, unlike cameras used by television stations, the Department of Transportation or Purdue University. But the Internet equipment needed to install the cameras would boost wireless Web surfing in the areas of the cameras, Kirby said.

"We want to make sure families in the community feel safe at the park," Kirby told Schneider.

But feeling safe and being safe are two different things.

A story published July 9, 2007, at abcnews.com indicates that surveillance cameras are useful in solving crimes, but cameras have little impact on preventing crime.

Surveillance camera photos have been used to catch

everyone from the run-of-the-mill bank robbers to Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber.

ABC news reported that a British study on the effectiveness of surveillance cameras in the United Kingdom indicated that, at best, surveillance cameras had a negligible effect on deterring crime.

"They are good forensic tools -- after something happens, they'll tell you what happened," Jim Harper, the director of information policy studies at the Cato Institute, told ABC news. "But they do not provide protection against attacks, and that's a key distinction."

If there are problems at city parks, those who live in the areas might be better served by organizing neighborhood crime watches and working with police to report suspicious behavior.

Because of their usefulness in catching suspects after a crime, surveillance cameras in the parks could be useful. But taxpayers and city officials should be wary of additional costs, such as maintenance and upgrades for the cameras and software, which would likely not be covered after the grant money is spent.

Advertisement



Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslime.com
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™