

IMPD to host event to help public understand how homicide cases are investigated

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INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – Helping the public understand how homicide cases are investigated is the goal of a community meeting this week.

On Wednesday night the IMPD will host a conversation between police, prosecutors, crime lab techs and citizens.

One of the organizers explained a few of the most important lessons police want to public to learn.

IMPD investigators say the murder of a pastor's wife, Amanda Blackburn, nearly two years ago is a perfect example of how homicides can be solved with the public's help.

That is the often overlooked key to bringing killers to justice.

Last month, a 13-year-old boy was gunned down outside a restaurant in Castleton and this past weekend a trio of teens was wounded in a drive-by shooting on 38th Street.

The IMPD says in both cases justice has been obstructed by some parents' refusal to let their kids say what they saw.

Police say the significance of witness cooperation cannot be overstated when it comes to closing cases.

“The biggest piece is how important it is for the community to get involved with us solving these crimes,” said IMPD Lt. Karen Arnett.

Lt. Arnett wants to help people understand the challenges law enforcement face in solving homicides.

During the community event this week, prosecutors will explain how witness testimony is often critical not just to filing criminal charges, but also to securing convictions.

“If we don't have enough evidence for prosecutors, those charges will not be filed and sometimes detectives get blamed for that,” said Arnett.

In addition to stressing “see something, say something,” a crime lab expert will explain the difference between reality and fiction when it comes to DNA evidence.

Police also know many families get frustrated by a lack of communication with detectives, but with 26 homicide detectives responsible for hundreds of homicides, suicides and death investigations every year, keeping every family up to date with every detail can be a challenge, but it's one the IMPD is trying to fix.

“We’re working to do a better job of communicating with the families even when there is no new evidence to make sure they know we haven’t forgot about their loved one,” said Arnett.

The public meeting will be Wednesday night at Fairbanks Hall, 340 W 10th St, Indianapolis, IN 46202. It runs from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.