Thanksgiving Crime Spree—

During the days leading up to the Thanksgiving Holiday, the department noticed a concerning number of reports of thefts from vehicles, property damage and residential/business burglaries. We suspected many of these cases were related as they seemed to follow a path through the city and because of evidence recovered at the scenes. On Friday, November 25th, a theft from a vehicle took place at 319 Adams Avenue and the reporting party observed the suspect fleeing the area on a stolen bike. The reporting person provided a detailed description of the fleeing suspect to the responding officer. The suspect description was disseminated to another officer who believed the suspect description and behaviors matched that of a person he dealt with on October 30th. Officers made contact with the individual dealt with on October 30th and observed his appearance and clothing matched the description of the suspect involved in the theft at 319 Adams Avenue. Based on the officer’s observations, a search warrant was drafted and served at 218 Barney Street; many items believed to be stolen during this crime spree were recovered at that residence. Joshua F. Weller, age 22, was placed under arrest and transported to the Steele County Detention Center. He was later formally charged in District Court with Possession of Stolen Property. Investigators continue to work on these cases and connecting them to Weller.

Odd/Even Parking Summary—

With high hopes of educating citizens of the upcoming winter parking ordinance taking effect, our patrol division began issuing informational flyers to all vehicles parked on the streets one week prior to the changes in parking restrictions taking effect. During the first week the ordinance was in effect, we issued warning citations to vehicles in violation of the ordinance rather than payable citations. We were hoping the educational warning system would result in less violations than the previous year. We used this same system last year and experienced a 41% reduction in violations during the first week of enforcement. Sadly we report our efforts weren’t as successful as we hoped as we experienced a 30% increase in the number of violators.

Thanksgiving Eve Crash Leads to Arrest—

Thanksgiving eve in law enforcement circles is generally considered one of the biggest bar-nights in terms of patrons visiting their favorite watering hole. As a result, we are extra vigilant looking for drunk drivers on this night. On this Thanksgiving eve, officers responded to the 400 block of 18th Street southeast for a one vehicle crash. An arriving officer located a vehicle off the roadway that had struck a utility pole cable. The officer spoke with the female driver, identified by an international drivers license as Esmeralda R. Arteaga-Ibarra, age 28, and observed she displayed signs of intoxication. After failing roadside field sobriety testing, Arteaga-Ibarra was placed under arrest for DWI and transported to the Steele County Detention Center for further DWI testing; she later provided a breath sample which indicated her breath alcohol level was .20 or 1 1/2 times the legal limit of .08. Arteaga-Ibarra was formally charged in District Court with 3rd Degree DWI and Operating a Motor Vehicle without a Driver’s License. When Arteaga-Ibarra was speaking with officers at the crash scene, she indicated she was just leaving the bowling alley where she had “3” cups of beer. Ms. Arteaga-Ibarra made it one block before crashing her vehicle. She was very lucky she was not injured or injured an innocent person. This is just one example of why we are so vigilant for drunk drivers.

Woman’s Club Donation—

On December 1st, the Women’s Club of Owatonna presented Sergeant Tracy Duchene with a check to the Owatonna Police Department in the amount of $1616.00. The donation will be used to purchase a new Automated External Defibrillator (AED) for police officers to use on cardiac arrest patients. The AED has become an important link in the Chain of Survival in the community. Since 2000 when AED’s were introduced to our police cars, 13 lives have been saved by first responding officers. The Owatonna Police Department was one of four organizations to receive a donation from the proceeds generated by the Woman’s Club of Owatonna this year.