Cold Weather Alert—

On Thursday evening our officers responded to a couple reports of vehicle thefts; one occurring on Adams Avenue and the other on Holly Street. The common denominator in both of these thefts were an unlocked vehicle and the keys left in the car. In one instance, the keys were left under the floor mat and in the other, the keys were left in the ignition, with the car running unattended while it was being warmed up. This weekend the weather is projected to be more seasonal and probably will be for the rest of winter. We all like to crawl into a warm vehicle and many take the risk of leaving a running vehicle unattended while it warms. While not illegal to do so in Owatonna, some cities in Minnesota have ordinances against such practices that can lead to fines. For many of us, our vehicle are our prized possessions and one of the biggest investments we make. Would you consider leaving $30,000 in cash sitting in your driveway unattended—this writer would not, but many don’t think twice about starting a car and leaving it while it warms up. As crime prevention experts, we advise to protect yourself from being victimized and never leave your vehicle while the engine is running.

Financial Fraud Charges Filed—

On November 27th, our department began an investigation where a victim had found his credit union account had been cleaned out—he found out that some transfers had been made from his account to the account of a male suspect. Investigation revealed a male suspect contacted the credit union by phone and after providing a purported name, date of birth and social security number, requested the funds be transferred from the victim’s account to his account which had a negative balance. The suspect then made a number of withdrawals from his account with the stolen funds. A detective was able to view a surveillance video of the withdrawal transactions and was able to identify the suspect. Based on the aforementioned information, a complaint warrant was issued for the suspect, Robert J. Schirmer, age 49, and he was arrested in the lobby of the Hy-Vee Hometown Credit Union on December 11th without incident. Schirmer has been charged with Theft & Identity Theft—both felonies.

Cops in the Community—

Hats off to our police explorer post and advisors!! On Thursday and Friday, our explorers spent some time at Trinity Church to help with the Toys for Tots program. The group helped with distributing toys and goods to local families. Our explorer officers had great interactions with the public and built a great rapport. The explorers learned how important community policing and community involvement is for success. Our Explorer group is led by Officers Adam Dupic and Melissa Michael. The group is pictured to the right.

On Wednesday, Police Chief Keith Hiller and Captain Eric Rethemeier made an appearance on the Owatonna Today Show. During the show, the duo spoke on the topic of police use of force situations that are very prevalent in the media today and the training being conducted within the Owatonna Police Department to help mitigate similar use of force situations occurring within our community. To view the episode, please click here.

Also on Wednesday, Officer Brady Vaith visited Our Saviors Lutheran Church where he gave a presentation to a group in winter driving.