

COP bringing fraud awareness to Edson

By Victoria Carnaghan
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Three of Edson's Citizen On Patrol (COP) members have been certified in a fraud awareness program which will allow them to share tips with community members who want to protect themselves from getting fleeced.

COP president Dianne Burgess said she found out about the Alberta Motor Association's "Fraud Awareness Toolkit" course through the provincial COP organization. She said she was immediately interested in attending because it would help fulfill the broader part of COP's crime prevention mandate.

"We like to extend some of our services out to the community. The

better trained we are, the more we can do."

COP has staged fraud awareness sessions for seniors in the past. Burgess said the group wants to reintroduce a course this year because with every passing year new technology brings new schemes and scams.

"We'd like to do it again because there are so many updates, so many new things happening, so many new types of fraud that I wasn't even aware of."

She noted that poor economic times often mean an increase in criminal behaviour, especially fraud.

"With the economy being the way it is, fraud is probably going to go up. E-mail fraud, cyber-related fraud and identity theft — which is a big thing."

The latter issue in particular has been an increasing concern for years and was emphasized heavily at the course.

"It used to be criminals would take your cash and credit card and it would be a mugging." But, now instead of just cancelling credit cards, victims find their names used for government benefits, phone or utilities fraud, employment related fraud, not to mention banking.

"It's just everywhere."

The AMA certification will allow Burgess and her fellow members to cover a broad base of fraud awareness topics, which would cover social networking websites, working from home frauds, lottery or inheritance scams, cheque scams, counterfeit

products and fake currency.

"It's an awareness thing. A lot of people are aware of fraud but are not aware of the depth of it."

Burgess said she will also bring in guest speakers to give more in-depth information about specific areas.

"When it gets to the professional end of it, we bring in professionals to do it."

Burgess said the COP hopes to bring a fraud awareness session first to seniors in Edson, "because that's who criminals try to target and think they're easy prey."

However, the 18- to 24-year-old population is just as vulnerable because of their increased online presence. She hopes to offer a session for them in the future. Burgess hopes to have a session scheduled for seniors next month.

Boy's and Girl's Club Safe Walk program up and running

By Victoria Carnaghan
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A new program for Edson and District Boys and Girls Club kids is up and running.

Kids that attend the club's after-school program no longer have to find a ride to the club or worry about walking there alone after staff recently launched their Safe Walk program. Now, once the final bell rings for the day, club kids

meet leaders at two schools close to the club and everyone walks there together.

Children at farther away schools (such as Westhaven or A.H. Dakin) hop on a Grande Yellowhead Regional Division (GYRD) bus and head to Vanier Community Catholic School or Evergreen Elementary where they meet up with a club staffer and kids from that school who attend the club.

"It's a program to help our club

members arrive at the club safely from the local schools," explained Boys and Girls Club Executive Director Barb Quiring.

In the first few weeks of the program things have gone quite well — although not all parents are aware that Safe Walk has actually launched, Quiring said.

She said parents can feel comfortable signing their children up, and — because of donations from Telus and Suncor — they don't have to pay a fee.

The GYRD has offered its extra bus seats to club students. The buses pass the Boys and Girls Club on their regular routes, so non-club students don't have to ride longer than usual, Quiring noted.

Quiring emphasized that children have to be registered club-goers in order to take advantage of the program.

Call Trina Johann for more details at (780) 723-7240.