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CITY OF KEARNEY **PRESS RELEASE** ***For Immediate Release***

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Stolen Vehicle Recovered Following Crash

On Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 10:30 a.m., Kearney Police received a report of a vehicle theft in progress from the East Lawn Mobile Home community in east Kearney. The stolen vehicles owner called reporting they were following the vehicle. KPD Officers responded to the area and location of the vehicle provided by the owner and witnesses. An Officer observed the stolen vehicle at 34th Street and I Avenue traveling at a high rate of speed. Before Officers could attempt to stop the vehicle, the driver of the stolen vehicle lost control and struck a parked GMC pickup on the west side of Avenue I. The stolen vehicle continued south hitting a power pole and driving into yards in the 3300 block of Avenue I. After striking the front porch of a home and another power pole, the vehicle came to rest in a yard. At no time did the Kearney Police initiate a vehicle pursuit of the stolen vehicle.

The driver of the stolen vehicle climbed out of the wrecked vehicle and ran from the scene. KPD officers immediately observed the suspect on foot and were able to apprehend him quickly. The driver and only occupant of the stolen vehicle was transported to CHI Good Samaritan Hospital where he was treated and released for non-life-threatening injuries. Witnesses reported this same stolen vehicle struck a parked 2017 Jeep Wrangler and collided with a residence in East Lawn before officers located it on Avenue I.

The driver of the vehicle is a 14-year-old male from Kearney. Officers are working with Juvenile Probation and the County Attorney's Office on pending criminal charges to include Felony Theft, Felony Criminal Mischief, Felony Leaving the Scene of an Injury Accident, Obstructing a Peace Officer, Resisting Arrest, Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol, Willful Reckless Driving, Leaving the Scene of an Accident, and Unauthorized use of a vehicle.

Members of KPD believe this stolen vehicle as well as another stolen vehicle recovered this morning are related to a recent spike in vehicle thefts in Kearney. Over the past four weeks, KPD has taken 17 reports of stolen vehicles. The keys were in at least 15 of the 17 stolen vehicles and the vehicles were unlocked. Most of these vehicles were recovered in Kearney within 24 hours. In nearly every case, personal property was also stolen from inside the vehicle. Often these stolen vehicles were involved in other crimes such as vandalism, property thefts and other vehicle thefts.

"We have seen an alarming rise in vehicle theft over the past several weeks and have taken proactive measures to prevent theft through public outreach, selective deployment of patrol resources, use of technology, and follow-up investigation. As with any crime, our goal remains

to partner with our community toward prevention and solving these crimes. We are certain other individuals are involved and someone has information which may lead to arrests in each of these cases. I appreciate the hard work from our Uniform Patrol Officers and Investigators and remain thankful there were no injuries in the incident this morning. If you have information, please contact the resources listed.” – Chief Bryan Waugh

While the Kearney Police Department is working to prevent and solve vehicle theft, we need the help of our community. You are encouraged to take simple proactive measures to protect your vehicle from being stolen. Vehicle thefts are not only a financial loss to the owner, but also a serious safety concern to the rest of the community. By following some simple precautions, you can significantly reduce the risk of your vehicle being stolen. KPD remains committed to partnering with our citizens to provide a safe and secure community.

Tips to Prevent Vehicle Theft:

1. Turn it off: Never leave your car running unattended.
2. Take your keys: Never leave your keys or remote key fob in your vehicle. This is the easiest way to prevent your car from being stolen.
3. Lock it up: Always lock your vehicle, even if you are just running a quick errand. Unlocked vehicles are an easy target for thieves.
4. Be Vigilant: Report all suspicious activity you see by contacting Kearney Police Department at (308) 237-2104, Buffalo County Crimestoppers (308) 237-3424, or through the See It Say It Send It App.

This remains an on-going investigation. Witnesses or anyone with information on this investigation or video in these areas are asked to contact the Kearney Police Department (308) 237-2104, Buffalo County Crime Stoppers (308) 237-3424, or through the See It Say It Send It App.

Check out our web site at www.cityofkearney.org.