

The ATPA brought VIN etching, the process of etching a car's Vehicle Identification Number onto all of its auto glass, to the next level in 2006, teaming with Neiman Group to make the process more consumer-friendly. The campaign was called VINgraving, and it centered on a do-it-yourself kit that included gloves, etching cream, and a variety of decals and VIN stencils printed by the ATPA.

## VINgrave It!

The kits were packaged in bright blue triangular mailing tubes and sold at cost on [www.watchyourcar.org](http://www.watchyourcar.org) for \$8.99. Would-be thieves resist stealing a vehicle that is VINgraved because the vehicle is more easily identified and, if stolen, the auto's glass must be replaced in order to remove traces of the VIN.

Once a consumer placed an order, the Authority ran the VIN number given through a national crime database to ensure the number's validity.



The campaign rolled out in early September in the Lehigh Valley, which was chosen as a test market due to its significant auto theft problem. While the ATPA had seen a reduction in auto thefts across most of the state in recent years, Berks County saw an 80% spike in auto theft between 2001 and 2005, with thefts spilling into Lehigh County as well. The ATPA collaborated with the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office and the Reading City Police Department (which is part of the Pennsylvania State Police Central Auto Theft Task Force) to develop the VINgraving program.

To educate Lehigh Valley vehicle owners about VINgraving, the ATPA took to the streets, participating in community events including Reading's RiverFest and the Reading Royals season kickoff. A stripped-down Saturn door became our VINgraving demo door. The door made it easy for consumers to see what the process was about. Some even tried it themselves on the door's replaceable auto glass.



NOTHING LOOKS SCARIER  
TO A CAR THIEF THAN  
A VINGRAVED CAR.

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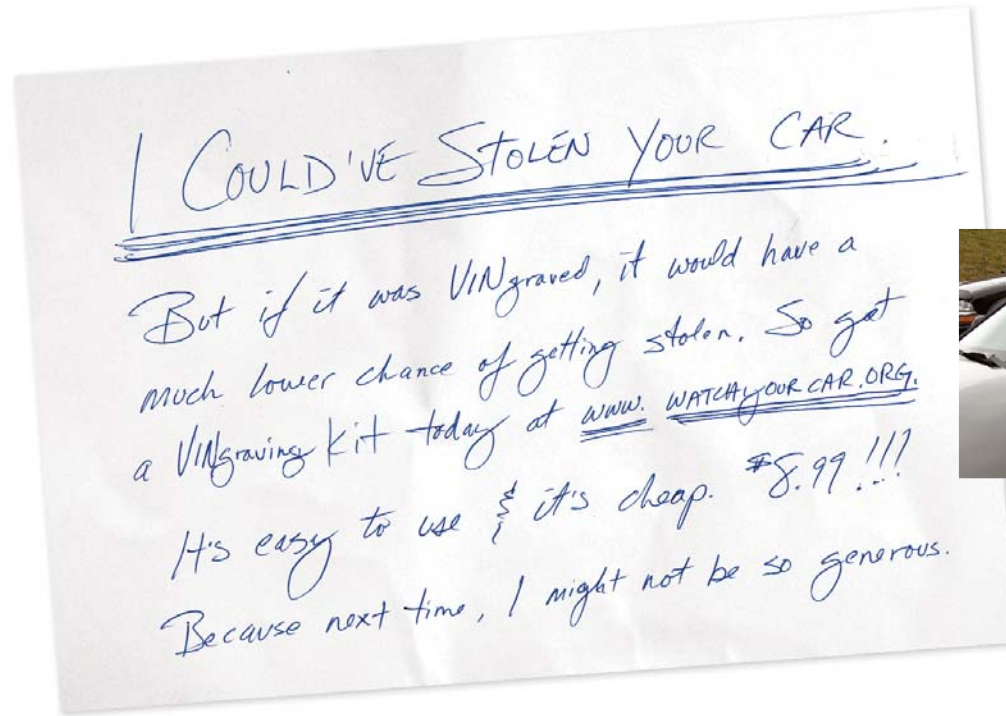
Unique vehicles were custom-designed to attract attention and spread awareness. The vehicles included the "Chain Car," a Toyota Camry wrapped in chains and padlocks with a decal that read "There's an easier way. [watchyourcar.org](http://watchyourcar.org)." Also in the fleet was the "Racecar," an old junker custom-painted bright orange to resemble a popular NASCAR, implying that even he could be a victim of auto theft.

Both cars made appearances throughout the Lehigh Valley and attracted a good deal of attention from passersby. Additional advertising included billboards and DJ and traffic reporter reads, as well as "Wanted"-style posters and brochures to alert drivers about the campaign. A radio media tour with Attorney General Tom Corbett and a top-story package on WFMZ (Channel 69) also helped spread the word.



## VINgraving EVENTS CONTINUE

As the VINgraving campaign launched in the Lehigh Valley, the ATPA continued sponsoring free events across the Commonwealth. One of the largest events, sponsored by ABC 27 (WHTM), was held on May 6, 2006 at the Capital City Mall in Camp Hill. It was staffed by volunteers from the ATPA, Pennsylvania State Police, Cumberland County District Attorney's Office, Erie Insurance, Progressive Insurance and Neiman Group. The event was held to educate and protect vehicle owners from auto theft.



*This flyer was placed on the windshields of non-VINgraved cars.*

A week prior to the event, WHTM's consumer reporter, Dennis Buterbaugh, who runs the channel's "Cool Car Wednesday" reports, alerted viewers to the event with promotional spots and a Friday evening preview package, which included sound bites from ATPA staff. Our partnership with WHTM did the trick! On the day of the event, patrons were lining up well in advance of the 10 a.m. start time.

While volunteers scrubbed windows, printed VIN stickers, and handed out additional ATPA information, WHTM was collecting video of the entire process

for the evening news. The VINgraving event package ran during the 6 p.m. news and featured sound bites from ATPA staff, volunteers and consumers, and gave an up-close look at what VINgraving is all about. The final tally of VINgraved vehicles came to more than 250, and consumers were extremely satisfied with the results! Grassroots activities continue to prove invaluable in educating Pennsylvanians about auto-theft prevention.

## GONE IN SECONDS!

The “Lock It or Lose It” campaign is another veteran ATPA program that continues to be successful. On Thursday, July 20, the ATPA held a mock auto theft at Joe’s Kwik Mart in Dunmore, and our “thief” showed onlookers and the local media just how fast—and easy—a vehicle can be stolen when left running outside a convenience store.

We joined forces with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Auto Theft Task Force to hold this “Lock It or Lose It” event. Participants included members of the ATPA, Northeastern Pennsylvania Task Force, Dunmore Police, Scranton Police, Wilkes-Barre Police, Pennsylvania State Police and Neiman Group.

In the week prior to the event, teasers were sent to the local media with phrases, “A car will be stolen at 11 a.m. Thursday. Will it be yours?” and “In the time it takes to buy a cup of coffee, someone could steal your car.” The media was so intrigued by the cryptic statements that they sent reporters from WYOU-TV/ WBRE-TV and WNEP-TV, and the Scranton Times-Tribune showed up to witness the mock auto theft.



After the road was blocked off, the victim pulled into a parking space near the entrance to the convenience store and darted into Joe’s Kwik Mart while her 2006 Honda Civic was still running. She passed a man “talking” on the pay phone, and as soon as she entered the store, he quickly hopped into the Civic and drove off. In seven seconds, her car was gone—the cameras capturing the whole sequence.

The media outlets received on-site quotes and sound bites to include in their news packages from ATPA staff and Myles Walsh, administrator for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Task Force. They also shot footage of one of the Kwik Mart employees hanging a “Lock It or Lose It” informational sticker on the front door. The colorful sticker provided a great visual and acted as a conduit to getting the ATPA logo in front of viewers. By the event’s end, Joe’s Kwik Mart was armed with stickers to display around the store.

The event coverage was phenomenal, with all local media outlets showing up and running news packages/stories about auto theft prevention.

## TRAINING IS A KEY PART OF THEFT PREVENTION

It's no secret that one of the most important tools in reducing vehicle theft is training, for law enforcement and vehicle owners alike. In 2006, the Authority educated 543 Pennsylvania law enforcement officers through its auto theft identification and investigation courses, and we look forward to seeing that number rise! The ATPA's curriculum includes a series of six training courses, which are offered free to Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies. Each program lasts two to four hours and is targeted to the professional police officer. The instructor, Joseph Datesman, is a retired Pennsylvania State Police lieutenant who spent 33 years of his career investigating and training other investigators on vehicle theft and related subjects.

- **Auto Theft 101** is designed to teach patrol officers what to look for during traffic stops and update them on laws concerning auto-theft-related crime. The course also includes information about VIN numbers, titles and license plates, as well as methods of theft.
- **Auto Theft 102** was developed for officers who will be participating in stolen vehicle investigations. The course addresses vehicle identification and methods used to alter VINs.

- **Auto Theft 103** focuses on identifying all-terrain vehicles.
- **Auto Theft 104** addresses motorcycle identification.
- **Auto Theft 105** discusses heavy equipment identification.
- **Auto Theft 106** teaches officers how to identify trucks, tractors and semi-trailers.

In other training news, drivers are never too young to start learning about the dangers of auto theft. In 2006, the ATPA developed and distributed STOPS, a "Cops and Reno 911!" parody about a self-appointed auto-theft prevention officer. STOPS, which was mailed on DVD to driver's education instructors across Pennsylvania, presents basic auto theft safety tips in a fun and engaging way to interest young drivers.

The ATPA looks forward to continuing our mission of combating auto theft through improved enforcement and public education in 2007 and beyond.

