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April 10, 2009

Boca police urge precaution to prevent thefts from cars

By Dale M. King
CITY EDITOR

Boca Raton police hear a lot of sad stories about valuable items being stolen from vehicles.

Here's one of them. Public Information Officer Sandra Boonenberg said that back in January, a man purchased a laptop computer in a store at Town Center at Boca Raton mall.

After making the purchase, the man and his wife went to a local restaurant where they ate dinner. When they finished dinner, they discovered their car had been broken into and their new computer had been stolen.

Four times since then, said Boonenberg, a similar scenario has played out where the victim's purchases were stolen from the car at the mall or from another location.

"Detectives from the Boca Raton Police Services Department, who are investigating these cases, believe the victims were not targeted inside the computer store, but some time after leaving the store."

The Boca Raton Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit urges all shoppers to take the following precautions:

- After making purchases, especially big-ticket items, go directly home and bring the purchases inside your house.
 - Never leave valuables, such as purses, wallets, i-Pods, etc., in your vehicle. Also, lock your vehicle every time you get out (even if it's just for a few moments like when you are pumping gas).
 - Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Park in a well-lighted area close to the store or mall.
 - Call 911 if you see suspicious people or incidents.
- If anyone has information about any these crimes they are asked to call Detective Mark Horowitz at (561) 338-1392.

Car wash chain steers clear of economic woes

By Dale M. King
CITY EDITOR

John Shullman, co-owner of a national chain of 18 car washes - one in Boca Raton (Express), one in Delray Beach (Rub-A-Dub) - has two words to say about the current state of the economy.

"What recession?" Shullman says business is up nearly 20 percent at the Express Car Washes in Florida and the company is searching for a new South Florida location where it will hire another 30 people.

The son and grandson of car wash operators who co-

owns some of the facilities with his brother, Michael, John Shullman said none of his businesses has been affected by the down dollar.

"If you need your car cleaned, you want to get in and get out," he said. His car washes have waiting rooms, but not the specialties that just delay customers. When people want a wash, he said, they're in a rush.

"Car washes are luxuries, but they're affordable luxuries, and people are willing to spend for them," Shullman said. "People want more than just a clean car - they want to

be treated well and get good service, and are willing to support a business that can deliver."

Good Fortune

Shullman figures his company's obsession with guest satisfaction is behind the good fortune. He said he runs a tight ship, but is liberal with bonuses for both associates and guests and steps in to vacuum and wash as needed.

"We focus on speed, quality and friendly associates," said Shullman, 45, who graduated from Iona College with a degree in business

administration. "We cannot control what goes on outside our property, but once someone drives on, we control it 100 percent."

While many firms have seen business drop since the start of 2009, Shullman is looking at positive numbers. "Express Car Wash saw its January and February business increase 20 percent compared to the same months a year ago at its three Florida locations - Boca, Delray and Jacksonville."

Hiring, Growing

He isn't totally unconcerned about the financial strife. "Yeah, I'm worried about the recession, but I think I have a good enough service and business model that I can continue hiring people and growing."

Shullman's father started the business in 1963 - though his grandfather had a car wash in the 1950s. The youngest Shullman estimates the business has detailed more than two million cars and washed 20 million more.

After his father retired in 1995 with three washes, Shullman and his brother took over and expanded the business and they share equally in its demands.

"We've had millions of

opportunities to succeed and millions of opportunities to fail. We're still focused on each individual wash."

Shullman also supports local charities and plans to increase his giving in 2009. In January, the company donated \$1,000 to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Fort Lauderdale and the Delray Beach and Boca Raton washes in January raised \$1,780 for the Dori Slosberg Foundation, a highway safety organization. He also supports The Haven in Boca Raton, a home for boys in the foster care system.

The company gave \$5,000 to Florida charities in 2008. Shullman said charity is the responsibility of every business and builds loyalty as well.

"In the current economy, a lot of charities are hurting and we plan on increasing our donations in 2009."

The company has 70 associates among its Florida locations. Last year, five left, none due to layoffs.

"That rate of turnover is unheard of in the car wash industry," said Shullman. "The only way people leave this company is if they fail to exceed our customers' expectations. We happen to wash cars, but we're really in the people business."



John Shullman, right, co-owner of the Express Car Wash chain, meets with some of his employees at his wash facility in Boca Raton.

Palm Beach County adds to deferred fee list



By John Johnston
MANAGING EDITOR

Palm Beach County commissioners have added the fire sprinkler system connection fee to a list of fees deferred by the Palm Beach County Water Utilities department.

Commissioners said the fee deferral system is designed to assist property owners converting from private wells, septic tanks, and/or private irrigation supply systems by deferring certain fees.

However, commissioners said the following factors must also be in place for the deferral to be approved:

- The building being connected to county fire line facilities must be preexisting.
- The building's existing fire protection system utilizes a non-public water supply, or the building had no prior existing fire protection system.

The deferred fee is then added to the customer's monthly billing, commissioners said.

Other Business

In other recent business commissioners:

- Approved a \$413,506 budget amendment in the public improvement fund recognizing revenue to be received from Florida Power & Light and increasing the Jail Expansion Program II (JEP2) project budget. Commissioners said the money from FPL is for a reimbursement for site earthwork performed by the county for the new Wheeler Substation located at the West County Detention Facility. In order to properly sequence the earthwork between the two projects (jail expansion and FPL substation), the county proceeded with the work on FPL's behalf, commissioners said.
- Approved a \$191,674 task order in an agreement with Colome & Associates, Inc to provide architectural/engineering services for renovations to the Greenacres Library. The work will provide architectural and engineering services for permitting, design and construction phase services for the renovation of Greenacres Library which includes mechanical,

plumbing, electrical, and interior design upgrades. This project is funded from the 22.3 million general obligation 2006 library improvement bond issue, commissioners said.

- Approved extension of an

interlocal agreement with the West Palm Beach Veterans Affairs Medical Center allowing for interoperable communications through the countywide and EMS common groups of the County's 800MHz Radio System. Commissioners said

the agreement provides for three, five-year renewals but renewals require approval by both parties. Both the hospital and county have agreed to extend the agreement through May 3, 2014.

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