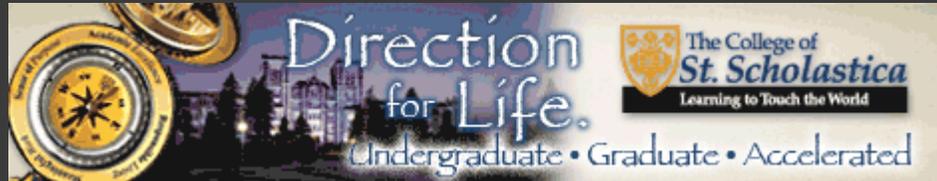




Thursday, May 15,
2008

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Don't buy stolen goods if you want a healthy neighborhood

by Don Samuels
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Originally posted 4/23/2008

Have you been in Pizza Hut lately? There is now a bulletproof security glass across the counter. You have to speak loudly into a small opening and then retrieve your pizza and pay through a heavy sliding drawer. The same is the case at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I don't know about you, but I feel totally belittled by these experiences. I am embarrassed to be treated this way.

Have you been to Cub Foods lately? The place is sparkling clean and very well run, but there are enough cops there for a small precinct. In fact, security costs Cub \$1 million per year (by the way, contrary to rumors, Cub Foods is not closing). In any event, it is taking a toll on the dignity and convenience of residents and profits of businesses, and I'm afraid we often encourage it.

Far too often, the good people of the community buy goods we sense are stolen. We convince ourselves that the price is too attractive to resist. And so, even though we have good reason to be concerned, we purchase the items anyway.

This happens at all levels. There are merchants who buy supplies of cigarettes stolen from other stores. There are scrap yards who have bought tubes of copper from people who rob our vacant houses. There are dealers who buy stained glass and woodwork from empty houses. And there are neighbors who buy goods stolen from other neighbors or from local stores.

However, while we may enjoy the great deal today, we are reaffirming a culture of crime that destroys the future. Years ago, you could order a CD on Broadway and have it delivered in 15 minutes with the Target tag still in place. And we know what happened at Target.

In addition, several businesses have contemplated moving here over the years, but they changed their minds because of these concerns. This fallout keeps our community in distress and makes the suburbs an even more attractive alternative for Northside.

By purchasing stolen property, we reaffirm criminal behavior and encourage thieves to steal again. It makes theft a viable occurrence and emboldens our misled youth. Our children see us buying these items and are confused about our values.

Did you notice that CVS on Broadway has full-time security? They were being robbed blind before they incurred that extra cost. In one case their entire deodorant supply was stolen — every single stick. If you bought that product, you were helping to destroy our community. Please stop!

If we want a livable community with a wide variety of goods and services offered in a gracious and pleasant environment, we must discourage theft.

We cannot afford to use poverty as an excuse. If you see someone in need selling a stolen item and you really care about him, buy his stolen CD for \$5 — give him the money instead. If you know someone who steals from our local businesses, tell them to stop.



It's a new day in North Minneapolis. We are entering an Era of Excellence. We want excellent services from government and excellent goods and services from businesses. But we must also demand excellent behavior from our neighbors and our children.

Let us refuse to accept ordering service through small openings set in bulletproof glass as the future of our community. Let us refuse to consider burdensome security costs as the future of businesses in North Minneapolis. And let us also refuse to take part in an activity that supports theft as a way of life and encourages the degrading of our community.

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