

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Kentwood Police Help Retailers Prevent Theft During the Holidays with Operation P.R.I.C.E.**

*Annual Program Educates Employees on How to Handle Shoplifters, Reduce Retail Fraud*

**Kentwood, Michigan, Nov. 13, 2018** – In preparation of the holiday shopping season, the Kentwood Police Department is again partnering with local store owners to prevent retail theft with Operation P.R.I.C.E., an educational program that has helped area retailers reduce crime during the holidays since 2014.

As part of the program, Kentwood Police educate store employees on how they can discourage shoplifting and how to identify potential crime, as well as what to do when a shoplifter is caught. The partnership between police and store owners also provides increased police presence in stores and on the streets.

According to the National Retail Federation's 2018 National Retail Security Survey, shoplifting was the top source of inventory shrinkage for the fourth year in a row, outpacing employee theft. Operation P.R.I.C.E., which stands for Preventing Retail Theft Through Initiative, Collaboration and Enforcement, has had a proven track record in helping local businesses decrease incidents of retail fraud.

Kentwood Police Chief Tom Hillen says the key to the program's success is the focus on collaborating with business owners and employees.

"At the end of the day, we are working toward the same goal: reducing crime in our community," Hillen said. "By proactively engaging with business owners and employees, and having open communication early on, we are able to equip them with knowledge and skills needed to help prevent crime. Being able to increase police presence at their shops also helps discourage theft."

This year, Operation P.R.I.C.E. will run from Nov. 24 through Jan. 4. During this time, participating retailers will have posters and signs displayed declaring their partnership with the Kentwood Police Department. Shoppers will also see police officers in and around the community's prime retail destinations, such as Woodland Mall.

"Operation P.R.I.C.E. has been well-received by retailers and shoppers at Woodland Mall," said Tony DeLuccia, Woodland Mall general manager. "Beyond the increased police presence in and around the mall, store owners have appreciated the education police provide on how to spot potential shoplifters to keep theft down during the busy holiday season.

"We've found the proactive approach of the program combined with the mutual respect between officers and retailers to be empowering for employees. The personal connections made with officers help employees feel more comfortable calling for assistance when they notice suspicious activity."

Operation P.R.I.C.E. was launched in 2014 by the Kentwood Police Department in an effort to curb retail theft along the 28th Street corridor.

The program has since grown beyond 28th Street in recent years, extending to 29th Street and doubling in participating businesses to more than 70 the past two years. Initially, calls for police services increased, resulting in more retail fraud arrests as store owners and employees used police as a resource. More recently, police have seen retail theft during the holidays on a downward trend.

“The apparent decline in retail theft during the holiday season is a result of proactive policing activities from the P.R.I.C.E. task force,” Hillen said. “Retailers are becoming familiar with how to file a police report, how to spot theft and what legal actions they can take. These education efforts along with the visibility of retailers’ partnerships with us are helping deter potential offenders.

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