

ALERT, An Example of Police Support

While we often hear about the lack of support of law enforcement, something great is happening in Shelby County, Tennessee. Shelby County Sheriff's Office Detective Steve Montgomery formed the Area Law Enforcement and Retail Team (ALERT). Detective Montgomery saw two major problems in Shelby County that he vowed to correct, and he did. He found that retailers would not share information with each other and that police "looked down" on retail security investigators. The lack of cooperation and disrespect stymied crime prevention in Shelby County and Memphis. Detective Montgomery brought law enforcement and retail security personnel together to form the ALERT squad. He holds meetings monthly. Police and Sheriff's deputies have learned that retail security investigations keep meticulous records, and possess excellent investigation and interview skills. The ALERT squad now has over 50 retailers and law enforcement agencies on board. Law enforcement benefits because their work is made easier by the support and interaction with area retailers. Detective Montgomery and the ALERT squad recovered over \$250,000 in stolen and counterfeit merchandise in a three-month period.

Detective Montgomery established a website, www.usalert.org, that provides retailers and law enforcement across the U.S. the opportunity to provide and to access information on persons arrested for professional shoplifting, selling stolen and counterfeit merchandise, engaging in I.D. theft, and other crimes against business. Law enforcement, approved retailers and others working in crime prevention may subscribe for membership by going to www.usalert.org and following the simple instructions. The ALERT database has over 250 contacts and it is growing in members every day. The cities of Chicago and Houston are also planning to form an ALERT squad as this article is being written.

Detective Montgomery's initiative is paying big rewards in Shelby County, Tennessee. Law enforcement and retailers in every city, town and hamlet should establish an ALERT squad. Cooperation between law enforcement and retailers must improve to effectively combat organized retail crime.