



Published February 19th, 2020

## T J Maxx thieves apprehended thanks to teamwork by witnesses

By Vera Kochan

At approximately 10:45 a.m. on Feb. 12, the T J Maxx located at 472 Center Street in the Rheem Shopping Center of Moraga fell victim to thieves.

Thanks to several witnesses pooling their observations they were able to not only get the license plate number of the getaway car, but a general vehicle description from a photo taken, along with accurate accounts of the suspects and their stolen goods. Recounting this information to a 911 dispatcher, the witnesses had the presence of mind to note the direction the suspect vehicle was heading as being north on Moraga Road toward Lafayette.

According to store managers, the items stolen were high-end clothing and products such as cologne and perfume at an estimated worth of approximately \$500. As the suspects, one woman and two men, exited the store, security tags triggered the store's alarm system. The witnesses, each of whom was located in different areas of the general vicinity, noticed the suspects running in the parking lot carrying armfuls of clothing still on the hangers.

Moraga Police Department officers responded to the report and notified the Lafayette Police Department who in turn spotted the vehicle, which had been reported stolen. LPD stopped the vehicle in front of Ace Hardware at 3311 Mt. Diablo Blvd. and detained four occupants until MPD units arrived on the scene.

According to the Moraga Police Department, officers recovered the property that had been stolen from the T J Maxx and the suspects were positively identified by witnesses as being involved in the theft. The suspects (Jimmy Swearengin 53, Major Mack 55, Shirley Johnson 32 and Tony Richard 44) all from Oakland, were arrested by MPD officers and later booked at the Martinez County Jail for a variety of charges including petty theft and conspiracy, probation violations and vehicle theft.

MPD Det. Kevin Mooney explained that these types of thefts often go to a fence (a buyer of stolen goods) who purchases the merchandise at reduced prices and in turn resells it for a profit, oftentimes at swap meets or flea markets.

Mooney gratefully acknowledged the witnesses, without whose efforts the suspects would have gotten away. He encourages residents to be vigilant and report anything suspicious to the authorities, but stresses that safety precautions be taken and not to physically engage with suspects -- leave that to the police. "Be a good witness," Mooney advised. "It helps quite a bit."

MPD asks anyone having any information about this case to please contact Det. Mooney at [mooney@moraga.ca.us](mailto:mooney@moraga.ca.us).

Reach the reporter at: [vera@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:vera@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA