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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



RETAIL WATCH

*Chico Police
Department invites
retail businesses of all
sizes to decrease
shoplifting in Chico.*

**Retailers encouraged to participate:
Monthly Meetings • Information Sharing •
Tips & Tools**

For dates and times call 530.891.5556.



Retail Watch Focuses on Trespassing at March 26th Meeting

March 15, 2018 CHICO, CA Last month, a Retail Watch initiative was launched by the Chico Police Department, Chico Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Chico Business Association, for retail businesses in the Chico area. The initiative partners law enforcement with retail representatives in monthly meetings to discuss theft prevention, reporting and prosecution, state and local regulations, and best practices for identifying and reducing shoplifting in Chico.

The next Retail Watch meeting is **Monday, March 26th, from 10am – 11am** at Oxford Suites in Chico. Attendees must be affiliated with a retail business to participate. Retailers of all sizes and locations within Chico are encouraged to participate. Each meeting will focus on a specific topic identified by retailers. RSVP to the Chico Chamber at: info@chicochamber.com, or by calling 530.891.5556.

At the March 26th meeting, Target Officer Paul Ratto will address questions about trespassing and educate retailers on the **Trespass Arrest Authorization form**. This discussion is provided as an outcome of the first Retail Watch meeting in February where retailers identified repeated theft as a top recurring challenge.

History: The Retail Watch initiative began with a series of Retail Roundtable meetings hosted by the Chamber and DCBA for businesses and the Chico Police Department in December of 2017 and January of 2018. At these meetings, retailers shared loss data and expressed concerns about increasing theft and decreasing accountability. A feeling of helplessness prevailed, with losses pushing up local prices, stifling job growth, and impacting consumers. Larger retailers frequently employ Loss Prevention officers who take preventative measures to deter theft, but businesses of all sizes are often left reacting to the troubling increase of petty crime in Chico.

Chico Police Chief Michael O'Brien decided monthly meetings were in order to open regular lines of communications between the Chico PD and large and small retailers in Chico. With individual businesses reporting losses of up to \$250K/year from shoplifting alone, the Chief declared this issue a priority during his "Year of Accountability."

Chief O'Brien says, "Even businesses that are the hardest hit need encouragement to report these crimes and be willing to prosecute. We often see that a shoplifting charge, even for minor theft, can result in an arrest for felony warrants or other crime. A recent shoplifting arrest at Kohl's, following a Retail Roundtable meeting, is a perfect example of that happening. As Chief, I find shoplifting and other theft unacceptable in Chico and want to send a strong message that we as a community will no longer tolerate it."

Katie Simmons with the Chico Chamber says convening the Retail Roundtable meetings over the last few months was revelatory. "I had no idea the cumulative negative affect shoplifting was having on our local economy and community. We certainly hear about it on business walks but when you gather retailers together and hear the magnitude of loss they're grappling with – it puts the issue in a whole new light. Watching businesses and the Chico PD work together on this issue by sharing information and learning best practices protects our retail workforce, property, and keeps prices as low as possible for local consumers. Businesses often say that raising prices is the only way they can compensate for financial losses resulting from shoplifting. It's not only dispiriting, it's an unnecessary drain on local consumers."

Melanie Bassett with the DCBA says, "Small retailers are often the most vulnerable to shoplifting – not having the loss prevention resources many bigger retailers have. Sometimes with only one person in the store running the cash register, a business has absolutely no means to protect itself from theft. We want small retailers to have the same access to the Chico PD and to tools and practices that are available. Plus, theft makes everyone uncomfortable and we need to stand together and say it's not acceptable in Chico."

Retailers interested in participating in the Retail Watch meetings are encouraged to call the Chico Chamber to RSVP: 530.891.5556. Meetings are open to retail owners, managers, employees, and loss prevention officers. Meetings will be held monthly through 2018 beginning in February.

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