

SHOPLIFTING....

What's wrong with that?

It's the holiday season, maybe your cash flow is running low after all the economic stresses we've all shared. You walk into a store and see a CD or a shirt you love, but you don't have the money to buy it. You look around and notice no one is watching you, it would be real easy to just slip the CD or shirt into the shopping bag you're carrying. You think to yourself... "Why not? Out of all the items the store has, they wouldn't miss this one little thing that I take!" **YOU ARE SO WRONG!**

The actual cost of the item you decide to take may be small, but it could very well be the most expensive investment of your life. **The typical shoplifter is young, old, rich, poor, male or female and come from all ethnic and racial backgrounds.** Shoplifting may seem exciting and easy, but many kids give into peer pressure and steal on a dare. Others say their parents won't buy the item for them, so they just took it. Some people, adults & kids alike, have gotten away with it already once or twice, so it becomes a habit. Believe it or not, many people who get caught stealing actually have the amount of money that the item cost in their wallet when they're arrested. **Make no mistake, shoplifting is stealing.** If you are caught, you can be:

- Detained and interrogated by store employees
- Arrested, handcuffed and possibly taken to jail
- Imprisoned or placed on probation
- Not allowed to set foot back in the store you stole from
- Forced to complete community service (could be anything from picking up garbage along highways to teaching others not to lead a life of crime)
- Made to pay fines and pay for the merchandise you stole (and no, you do not get to keep the merchandise)
- Have a permanent police record

Still think it's no big deal? An arrest record can scar you for life. A police record can literally prevent you from getting certain jobs. **OR**, if you

are already employed, you could lose your job. It can destroy your chances for a higher education, other career opportunities, and more. **Keep in mind, this is for the rest of your life, not just a few years!** Many employers conduct background checks on prospective employees and a police record could cost you a job. Think about it -- If you were a manager at a store, would YOU want to hire someone who was arrested for stealing? No employer wants to hire a thief. A police record for shoplifting can prevent your acceptance at a college or a university. The military service academies (for example, West Point) are among some institutions who have refused to accept otherwise qualified applicants due to a police record for theft. A record can also make it difficult (or impossible) to apply for special licenses required for some businesses or professions. A career goal of law, banking, real estate, medicine or security can be forgotten with one shoplifting mistake. **Still think it's worth it?.....**

For further information, please call the Community Affairs Unit of the Pembroke Pines Police Department at 436-3274 or 435-6538.