

Stealing from the youth of Gallup. Thieves target park concession stands

Written by By Kimberly A. Gaona Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 June 2015 04:38



Between a new board, trouble finding coaches, disruptive parents and poor sportsmanship, it has been a tumultuous year for the Gallup Amateur Baseball Softball Association.

However, the most heart wrenching part of the season has been the half dozen concession stand burglaries that have hurt the league, the youth, the Community Pantry and the various groups using the stands as a way to raise funds for their own youth groups.

Kevin Menapace, president of the league, said thieves are stealing from the kids. He explained that the league was renting the concession stands in order to have money to pay umpires and to pay for tournaments and other things for the youth of the community.

For the past three weeks, the league has not been charging rent in order to help the various organizations with the loss that they have sustained. He said that the suspects are damaging the concession stands, breaking doors or other entryways in order to get into the structures and steal the food as well as pots and pans and popcorn machines.

"If they are in need of food, they could go to the Community Pantry and do it the right way," Menapace said.

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Menapace also said that this has occurred at least six times at various concessions stands throughout the city. He estimates the damage and the loss to be between \$5,000 - \$7,000.

“It seems to be happening during the weekends,” he said.

He added that the City of Gallup has been extremely helpful and expedient in getting new doors and security gates on the structure.

Hilda Kendall, of the Jim Harlin Community Pantry, said that the new security measures have not stopped the break-ins and that the thieves are quick and are getting good at the burglaries.

“We’ve been broken into twice and they have taken inventory, the third time they weren’t successful, but they did heavy damage to the door,” she said. “We’ve lost about \$800 in inventory.”

Because the Pantry participates in the program Eat Healthy, Play Hard, the employees are passionate about the youth of the community, offering their concession stand products at cost and free healthy snacks to the players.

The pantry has resigned themselves to hauling all of their inventory to and from the concession stands for the last few weeks of the season, and they are no longer leaving products at the stands.

“They are hurting their community,” Kendall said. “For us, this was about our community, this was not a fundraiser.”

The Community Pantry received a \$100 donation from Dr. Lawrence Andrade, who serves as Vice President of the GABSA board.

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They also received three bags of donated candy from an unnamed parent of a player.

Anyone wanting to make a cash donation can take it to the Community Pantry. Checks and money orders can be mailed to P.O. Box 520, Gallup, NM 87305. Candy donations can be taken to the concession stand at Father Dunston Park at Park Avenue and Fourth Street for one more week.

Another sad victim of these burglaries is Raye Ann Wicketts, the sole proprietor of three of the concession stands. The cost and profit are her sole responsibility and income. Wicketts said that she has operated various concession stands for 19 years and after the burglaries she is not sure if she wants to continue.

She has suffered a loss of almost \$2,000.

"I don't know if I'll ever do it again," she said.

She has even gone as far as staying in her vehicle all night long to watch various concession stands and hopes to catch the culprits and help bring them to justice.

"I'm going to catch them," she said adamantly.

She also said that there is no one to blame, and that the city is doing their part to replace damaged doors quickly. She also said the police collected evidence at at least one burglary that will help to prosecute the burglars once caught. She now removes all of her inventory out of the concession stands, as the Community Pantry does.

Wicketts said that the thieves have a tool/saw that they are using to gain access to the structures and are using it again and again, which makes her believe that it is the same people

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committing the burglary at each stand.

Gallup Police Department Capt. Rick White said the police are watching the areas more closely.

“We’re patrolling the area more often,” he said. “But we need the citizens eyes and ears. Call us if you see anything.”

Crimestoppers is offering a reward up to \$1,000 for information on the suspects. Anonymous tips can be called into (505) 722-6161. In progress crimes should be reported to 911 or Metro Dispatch (505) 722-2231. Anyone having information on the people responsible should contact GPD Detectives at (505) 863-9365.