

Bike thefts rile students

Students report dozens of bike thefts to DPS each year

BY BLAISE HART SCHMIDT
Staff Reporter

Junior John Messina woke up one morning last summer to find his Trek mountain bike missing. He had left his bike unlocked on the wrap-around porch of his private residence on the corner of Harrison and Florence Streets.

This was the second bike Messina has had stolen while in Kirksville.

"The first bike I had stolen was taken from a friend's house off campus, ... and it was just a silver Puch road bike, and it was taken off the side of the house," Messina said. "It was kind of halfway in the bushes and halfway not in the bushes. It wasn't locked up at all."

Messina said he was unable to recover either bikes.

"I went through the actual Kirksville Police Department, and I even followed leads that somebody gave me saying there was some local guy who would occasionally get drunk and steal students' bikes and leave them on his lawn," Messina said. "So I even went and looked at this guy's house to see if my bike was around and it wasn't."

Messina isn't alone. According to the 2008 Campus Crime Report, there were a total of 81 thefts on campus in 2006 and 70 in 2007.

DPS sergeant Leon Shears said he is unsure of how

many of those thefts on-campus were bikes, but he thinks a majority of them were.

Shears said DPS registers bikes at no charge to help recover stolen or misplaced bikes.

"We give them a decal that has a number on it to put on the bicycle, and that definitely helps us if their bike goes missing," he said. "The first thing is we have all their information on file, the serial number and model number, and that helps us identify the bike when it's located, and the sticker itself will help us if it's still there when we find it."

Shears said that if someone's bike has been stolen, that person should immediately report the theft to DPS.

"We'll make a report, our officers go around and check bike racks — some extra eyes looking out for the bike," he said. "Any theft reports we take are accessible to [the Kirksville Police Department] and to the Sheriff's Department, so you've got two other departments looking as well for your bike."

The theft statistics for 2008 have not yet been published, but they will be available in the 2009 Campus Crime Report, which comes out in September, Shears said.

Shears said recovered bikes are taken to a storage facility located in the basement of Greenwood High School. If bikes are not claimed within six months, they are auctioned off through the Recycling Center.

Howard Worcester, recycling and surplus property coordinator, said the Recycling Center receives bikes from DPS on a semiannual basis.



Junior John Messina, above, brings his bike into an indoor storage room for safe-keeping. He keeps his bike indoors at night because he has suffered two bike thefts on private property. Freshman Brad Krebs, below, locks up his bike outside of the Student Recreation center after classes the morning of March 25.

"We have sales about four to five times a year, there's really no set date, just whenever we get enough surplus in," Worcester said. "[The next sale] will probably be in the latter part of April."

The surplus sales take place at the surplus recycling center on Saturdays at 9 a.m., he said. Worcester said the items for sale aren't limited to just bikes.

"We sell you name it — computers, printers, furniture, we've even had a hot tub one time, vehicles sometimes," he said. "... We've had some farmer's equipment, whatever the University property [has] deemed too old or unusable, and we get it, and we sell it."

Worcester said he has seen bikes sell for anything from \$2 to \$80.

"Surplus sales really are a good place for students to pick up inexpensive items like computers and furniture, and they're really a reasonable price," Worcester said.

Meanwhile, Messina said he always makes sure to lock his bike now, on and off campus.

"Intuitively, it would seem to make more sense to lock your bikes on campus, and then there's more of a sense of security when you're home," he said. "I've had two bikes stolen from private property, so I would say be pretty good about locking your bikes when you're at home. Always lock them."

Messina is still looking for his bike, stolen almost two years ago.

"If anyone see's a [silver] Puch around, then let me know," he said.



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