

Niles Herald-Spectator

Updated 8/7: Register to reunite with stolen bikes, Niles police urge

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/niles/news/1097185,ni-bikes-080708-s1.article>)

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By **TONY BERTUCA** tbertuca@pioneerlocal.com

Recovering a child's stolen bicycle should be cause for celebration.

But most of the time, police have no idea who owns the recovered bike and are unable to return it. That's because bike owners don't take the time to write down the bike's serial number and report it to the police.

In fact, Niles Police Sgt. Tom Davis said that 42 bikes were stolen between 2007 and 2008, but only four owners were able to give police the serial numbers.

"There is a problem here, and it is basically the fact that people don't take the time to record the serial numbers of their possessions," Davis said. "It is a common problem. It happens with our electronic appliances as well."

Every year the Niles Police Department accumulates a number of lost or stolen bikes and is forced to sell them at an auction because their owners cannot be identified.

But the police have teamed with the Niles Teen Center to encourage children to sign up with the National Bike Registry.

"Niles residents can register their bicycles here at the police department," Davis said. "We will record the serial number and give the bike owner a sticker to place on their bike free of charge."

Less than 3 percent of stolen, unregistered bikes are returned, and it only takes an estimated seven seconds to steal a locked bike, according to police.

"The bike owner should also place some identifying marks like initials on the bike in inconspicuous locations," Davis said. "This will help identify the bike should it be located and the serial number is either not known or has been removed from the bike."

Mark Williams, director of the Niles Teen Center, said several bikes have been stolen from outside the center's Golf Mill headquarters.

"We've had a lot of bikes stolen," he said. "That's mostly because the kids aren't locking them up. But the registry is good because it's national, not just Niles. So, if your bike turns up in Des Plaines or Skokie or Morton Grove -- they'll know."

Williams keeps the registry paper work at his office, encourages children to sign up, and then takes it to the police department.

The Teen Center will also be adding kids to the bike registry at its Aug. 16 open house.