

Staten Island Mall shows mugshots of repeat shoplifting offenders on digital billboards

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NO IMAGE **John M. Annese**

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- If you shoplift at the Staten Island Mall, you could end up the wrong kind of famous.



Advance file photoThe Staten Island

Mall is displaying mugshots of repeat shoplifters.

That's the message District Attorney Daniel Donovan is hoping to send by flashing a half-dozen mugshots of repeat shoplifting offenders on the Mall's digital billboards this holiday season.

"This effort that we've done for the last three years is to discourage people from shoplifting," Donovan said at a press conference in the Mall yesterday morning.

The idea, he said, is to show anyone tempted to steal that the crime could cost them far more than what they would have paid to buy the product legitimately. "We will prosecute people for the crime of petit larceny," he said.

More than 250 people have been banned from the Mall for theft-related crimes, Donovan said. That's on par with the number banned in 2009, and higher than the roughly 185 banned in 2008.

Donovan said his office has gotten complaints from the some of the offenders featured on the video, and to him, that means the campaign is working.

"I've watched people pass by these monitors in the past year and say, 'I know him,' or 'I know her,'" said Gerald Amerosi, who runs Gold Mine Jewelers in the Mall.

The 15-second mugshots video will run throughout the holiday season, every six minutes on 11 digital billboards located throughout the Mall, according to Donovan and mall officials. Officials expect them to be viewed a cumulative 4.8 million times by shoppers.

The ads are being paid for not by taxpayer dollars, but by money seized from criminal activities, Donovan said, run.

Donovan will also be offering similar mugshot posters to stores like Target and Stop & Shop, he said.

In addition to Amerosi, Donovan was joined by representatives of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation and AdSpace Networks.