

The Temple News

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Lost property gathers dust

Your heart stops. You check every pocket and look around frantically. You could have sworn you put your cell phone in your pocket. But it's not there. That's when Lieutenant Louis Montessoro comes to the rescue.

A police officer since 1979, Montessoro has run Temple's Lost and Found for the past six years. He is one man with the colossal task of keeping track of lost items and returning them to their owners. His office, located in the Campus Safety Services building on Montgomery Street between 11th and 12th Streets, betrays him to be the ultimate packrat with its many filing cabinets and boxes of lost items.

In his office there is a milk crate filled with keys, a box packed with Owl Cards, a multitude of wallets and cell phones. There are also some more unique things: a completely new and empty medic bag, a cabinet made to hold jewelry containing various necklaces and bracelets and a testing kit for diabetics, briefcases, textbooks, book bags and other belongings. Recently, a bag containing \$94 was turned in. It was picked up during an interview with Montessoro.

With lost Owl Cards, Montessoro looks up the student in the directory and e-mails him or her to inform them that he has their lost card. Cell phones are slightly more complicated. Montessoro typically goes through the numbers to find a parent to tell them he has the phone. If not a parent, then he'll try to find a friend. Montessoro has delivered ob-

jects to people's homes after work, or mailed them.

"I do what I can to get things back," Montessoro said, noting that it is difficult to find the owners of items without a name or any identifying features.

Software called RETURNITY could make his job easier. It is lost and found management software used at schools like Pennsylvania State University and New York University. With the program, Montessoro would be able to list items found and students could log in and search the lists for their belongings. Students could also log in and list any belongings they have lost. The software will then put together possible matches. Montessoro is currently negotiating to bring this software to Temple.

Until that happens, Montessoro keeps a

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detailed paper log where he describes every item that comes in and notes if the item was recovered.

Students tend to panic and assume that anything they lose is lost forever. Often though, the lost items are just in Montessoro's office. Students, police officers and Allied Barton Security workers bring in lost objects daily. Montessoro said students should check in with the lost and found office.

"I get calls all day long. It's rare that I have the item when they call," Montessoro said. "I'll tell them to check back in two or three days."

Montessoro will sometimes will run into items that the owner doesn't want to retrieve. One year a laptop computer was found in a laundry room and brought in. Montessoro contacted the student and the student told him that she left the laptop in the laundry room because she got another one and didn't need the old laptop anymore.

After keeping items for six months to a year, Montessoro gets rid of lost objects. Many items go to St. Malachy's Church.

"They take what they can use" Montessoro explained.

Leftover cell phones have recently been donated to Verizon Wireless, where they are converted into emergency 911 phones, which are phones that only call 911 once the "Talk" button is pushed.

With money, if there is any left in the after six months to a year, Montessoro said they usually just give it back to the person who brought it in.

"Put your names on stuff whenever you can," Montessoro advised. "Your name or phone number is important. It makes it much easier for me to get them back."

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