

OfferUp theft suspect nabbed

*Man, 30, allegedly used
app to find vehicles*

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Shelton police detective Ses Maiava couldn't be happier with the end result now that a suspected car thief who struck twice in two days last month in Shelton has been arrested thanks to security camera footage from the Mason Transit-Community Center, social media, news media, tips from private citizens and some solid police work.

Shelton police apprehended 30-year-old Dai P. Ngyuen of Tacoma without incident around 1:30 a.m. Sept. 25 at the Little Creek Casino Resort after being tipped off by Little Creek security and Squaxin Tribal Police.

He's accused of stealing a 1998 Honda Civic on Sept. 18 and a 2004 Mazda sedan the following day from the downtown Shelton Safeway parking lot after meeting his victims through a cellphone app known as OfferUp. The accused thief contacted both victims via OfferUp, told them he was interested in buying the cars and asked to take the vehicles on a test drive, but never returned. Both the Honda and Mazda were located and recovered in Tacoma days later. Neither car was damaged, nothing

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had been stolen out of them and both were returned to their rightful owners.

"Those things happen more frequently than you might imagine," Maiava, the lead detective on the case, told the *Journal*. "Sometimes people just want to take a joyride or just use the car to get from one place to another. Sometimes they end up in a chop shop, but that wasn't the case here. It looks like the guy just needed a ride somewhere and was using them just to get around."

Nguyen was caught on Transit-Community Center security cameras and identified as the suspect by both victims, as well as a Mason Transit Authority bus driver.

Police had little doubt they had the suspect as security video appeared to show Nguyen getting into and driving away in one of the stolen vehicles, Maiava said. OfferUp gave police the description of the suspect and matched the profile used on the app to contact the victims.

Shelton police then distributed still photos of the video foot-

age to news outlets and posted the photos on social media sites.

According to Maiava, the department received around a dozen phone calls regarding the photos, which provided three or four legitimate leads that led to the arrest.

"The people at the Transit Center were a tremendous help, as they always are when there are cases involving the area near there," Maiava said.

"They're always helpful in assisting us with crimes in that vicinity and they were more than willing to provide to us what they caught on their se-

curity cameras." With a suspect in custody and stolen property back in the hands of their rightful owners, Maiava is grateful for the assistance his department received in closing the case.

"I'm very happy, very pleased," he said. "We couldn't have done this without all the help we received, especially from the media. We got a tremendous response from the public on this case. Sometimes we get too much information, but in this case, the amount of information we got was just the right amount to follow up

on and confirm."

Nguyen was booked into Mason County Jail and is facing two counts of attempted theft of a motor vehicle. His bond was set at \$2,500 and he remains at the jail. Nguyen's next court appearance is scheduled for Oct. 10.

In August, Shelton police set up a safe exchange zone, located in a parking lot adjacent to the department, where those looking to buy or sell items via online outlets like OfferUp or Craigslist may exchange those items in a secure location.