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## **City Store Owner Charged as “Leader of Organized Retail Theft”**

Mercer County Prosecutor Joseph L. Bocchini Jr. announced today that a two-month investigation conducted by his Economic Crime Unit with assistance from the Rite Aid Corporation Loss Prevention Unit has led to the arrest of an owner of MR Supermarket in Trenton.

Just before noon on Thursday, detectives with the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office executed search warrants at MR Supermarket, located at 1300 Chestnut Avenue. Cigarettes, cash and paperwork were seized. One of the store’s owners, Ladislao Martinez, 43, of Tipton Street in Hamilton, was arrested and charged as being a leader of organized retail theft, receiving stolen property and fencing.

The leader of organized retail theft charge, *N.J.S. 2C: 20-11(2)*, is a second-degree offense and carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$150,000 fine.

According to Bocchini, his ECU was contacted in January regarding retail thefts of merchandise from a Rite Aid store at 1091 South Broad Street. The investigation revealed that shoplifters would sell items stolen from the store to the MR Supermarket at a discounted rate.

In these types of cases, merchants purchase items shoplifted from retail stores at a deep discount, generally 10 – 25 percent of the retail value, Bocchini said.

The full retail value of the stolen merchandise, including cigarettes and batteries, is valued at more than \$500.

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Mercer County Superior Court Judge Pedro J. Jimenez set bail at \$35,000.

Bocchini credited Detective Michael Ferraro of his Economic Crime Unit with the investigation leading to the arrest. He also praised the Rite Aid Corporation Loss Prevention Unit for its valuable assistance. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor James Scott, chief of the ECU.

Despite having been charged, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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