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Arundel sheriff's sting swag make history

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Car magnets promoting phony businesses, bogus invitations to pick up tax refund checks and fake gift boxes for Valentine's Day - all props employed in imaginative stings executed by the Anne Arundel County Sheriff's Department - are about to become history.

On Friday morning, representatives from the National Law Enforcement Museum are scheduled to take the items they want for the collection now under development in Washington.

"We are looking for things that tell a story," said Laurie A. Baty, senior director of museum programs.

The sheriff's items are a bit of local history, of law enforcement history and "say something about law enforcement's sense of humor," she said.

The sting operations were designed to lure suspects with outstanding warrants to their arrests. They are now too well-known to repeat, and Sheriff Ron A. Batemen said he considers the museum's request an honor.

"They contacted me. I said come on down, take what you want," he said.

The most recent such operation was the Valentine's Day Keystone Candygrams, complete with a Web site and custom-designed box that promised "Just one bite and you're hooked."

A previous Valentine's Day sting, with Flowers By Ron, offered "an arresting bouquet." The tax-refund letters urged invitees to go to the Comptroller's Office in Annapolis for the money the state owed them.

The items will join other Maryland memorabilia that have been donated, including a 19th-century history of the Baltimore Police Department and an original badge used by that agency, Baty said.

Construction on the 55,000 square-foot museum is scheduled to begin in October. It is scheduled to open in 2013 or 2014.

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