

Butter Bakery robbed - but not of its owner's eloquence

Article by: , Special to the Star Tribune

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Dan Swenson-Klatt of Butter Bakery Café in south Minneapolis has taken the art of the customer newsletter to a new level.

Butter Bakery was robbed of a large sum of cash on May 22. Here's how Swenson-Klatt responded:

He describes the robbery as "a pretty standard hit on a small vulnerable business," where one of a pair of robbers "distracts the staff while the second member sneaks around, breaks into whatever is necessary under the cover of noise and activity and quietly leaves, trying to not call attention to the damage or the action."

Swenson-Klatt then notes that his "sense of security" has been "shaken." He continues in standard, non-exceptional language: "Fortunately, it is not lost as well."

Every word after that strikes me as non-standard and exceptional.

"Security for me is not about bigger door locks, louder alarms, gated communities and more cameras; it is about a community that cares for one another and steps in when times are tough. Security is about a team of co-workers who trust and rely on each other, much like a family. Security is about neighbors who watch out for each other, offering support when needed and asking for it when needed."

With antithesis, repetition and parallel structure, Swenson-Klatt's language "sings to me," to use my wife's phrase. "Security is built on openness, generosity and respect," he continues. Then he does something that truly surprises me; he writes from the robbers' point of view:

"The two men suspected in this 'distract and sneak' game likely do not have anything of this kind of security. Who can they open up to and share their joys and sorrows? They aren't going to go onto their Facebook page and be all happy about robbing a little neighborhood café. I doubt the cash will be used for any generous purpose. And if cash is their measure of security ... it will soon be gone and they'll be right back where they were, desperate and insecure. When our families, city, state and country are willing and able to offer the support needed to help these men feel secure, we all will be in a much less worrisome place. And, as I am able, I intend to be someone who offers this kind of support."

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He then notes that Butter Bakery Café has installed "a new security item" -- a front screen door to prevent birds that are "handy at cleaning up crumbs" from wandering inside. "Our generosity and openness has to stop somewhere," he quips.

Then, in keeping with his theme of generosity, he concludes by asking his readers to become part of a community network of support for "our neighbors on the Northside who faced a larger, natural robber in the form of a tornado."

Swenson-Klatt's eloquence goes beyond language and stylistic technique. His words are grounded in the kind of values that make our small businesses, local communities and country so resilient in the face of threat and disaster.

How can you not think well of such a business and business owner?

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