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Hero Returns Webster After Bear-snatching

The Capital Times :: METRO :: C1

Wednesday, March 21, 2007
By Lynn Welch The Capital Times

Webster, the Capitol Kids mascot bear and all-around downtown Welcome Wagon, has returned to the Capitol Square. The life-size stuffed bear vanished Saturday shortly after Madison's St. Patrick's Day parade. Store owner Peg Scholtes put out an impassioned press release announcing the bear's disappearance from in front of the toy store at 8 S. Carroll St. News reports, countless calls and e-mails followed. Then, Scholtes got a call from Ron Phelps on Tuesday. "He said he was out Saturday night and saw a bunch of guys playing darts and one had a big bear strapped to his back," Scholtes recounted. "At the end of the night, (Phelps) asked if he could have it for his nephew."

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Phelps, a Madison resident and financial adviser with Morgan Stanley, learned Monday through a friend that the bear had gone missing from Capitol Kids, where he returned it Tuesday to applause.

For his efforts, Phelps had his photo taken with Webster, as many have before him. In it, Phelps held a sign reading, "Hero." "I think it's hilarious," Phelps said. "At least the bear found his home again."

Scholtes said she's still shocked Webster was returned. But she believes that now, people will watch him even closer.

For nearly seven years, Webster has been a familiar sight on the Square. The bear greets store customers as well as downtown visitors and regulars (often in various costumes), hands out downtown maps and reminds people to vote.

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