

## Contractor, plumber find \$3K in gym sock

By Alexandra Perloe LEOMINSTER -- Shawn Walker and Jim Chesbrough often find curious trinkets in old homes they renovate, but they topped the list with a gym sock last week.  
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That's because someone had stuffed the sock with about \$3,000 in cash.

Chesbrough, a general contractor, had torn up the bathroom floor in a Medford home to make the house handicap accessible.

"I knelt down and took a look at the plumbing situation, and noticed there was a sock folded up on top of the insulation. I picked it up, and lo and behold, it had money in it," Walker, a plumber, said in a phone interview Monday.

The cash repository was an "old sock, a white gym sock," Chesbrough said.

He spoke to a reporter twice Monday: once from his cell phone while on site in Medford, and later in the dining room of his Leominster home.

Chesbrough and Walker had the same gut reaction.

"We knew right away that it wasn't ours, and we should return it," Walker said. "And besides, we're doing a handicapped bathroom for an early 20s young man who paralyzed himself on a motorcycle. The last thing we need on our conscience is stealing money from someone like that."

The most surprising part of the experience, Chesbrough said, has been other people's response to his honesty: People keep asking him why he didn't keep the money.

"Why have the values been pushed down to where it's peculiar to be honest?" Chesbrough, who is a Jehovah's Witness, asked.

"He had people calling him saying, 'What's wrong with you?'" said his wife, Debbie Chesbrough, who helps run their company, Wood Wise Construction.

The homeowner was out when Chesbrough and Walker found the sock, so they put it aside for a few hours.

"We wanted to open it up and look at the date on the bills. But the temptation would have been too much for some of the guys," Chesbrough said.

He did count the money later, though, so he'd know if any went missing.

He counted 27 \$100 bills, and there were still "a bunch of 50s and 20s" left over, so he estimated the sock's stash at about \$3,000.

"The guys were feeling it all day long. And I said, remember guys, it's an old sock you're touching," the contractor said of his workers.

One workman pointed out that \$3,000 could buy multiple plasma televisions, Chesbrough said.

Steven Bilodeau, a carpenter who works for Wood Wise, said he was impressed with Walker and Chesbrough's instinctive integrity.

"I think everybody likes to think of himself as honest. But for a lot of people, it's a gray area," Bilodeau said on the phone Monday. "Just the way (Walker) did it, he never had a second thought. I think it was amazing."

The homeowner told Chesbrough that his father, a Vietnamese immigrant, had hidden the money years ago.

"He hid it there, and of course, forgot about it," Chesbrough said.

The contractor recently read an article about a similar scenario -- a woman who found \$1,000 in a donated pair of pants -- in "Watchtower," an international publication for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Chesbrough didn't receive an award for returning the \$3,000, and he said he didn't do it for the glory -- though glory has ensued. Television news stations aired segments on him and Walker, and newspapers as far away as Las Vegas have called him for interviews.

He would have given it back even if he hadn't just read the article in "Watchtower," Chesbrough said.

Otherwise, "My dad would have slapped me," he said with a laugh.