



Police Foundation Helps Crime Prevention and Prediction

by Tom Murphy (May 2014)

The ongoing mission of the Police Foundation is to secure private funding to enhance the safety of our community. We do that by providing grants for the **equipment, training** and **technology** needs of our Police Department.

Computer technology, given its diminishing costs, has expanded substantially in law enforcement over the past two decades. It is used in records management, crime investigation, information sharing, fingerprint identification and dispatch. Officers are increasingly able to query an expanding array of databases that have the potential of making the Officer more efficient, more effective, and more knowledgeable and thus a greater asset to the safety of our community.

In April the Police Foundation made a **\$13,000 grant** to the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department for the purchase of a new computer technology package that will help forecast the highest risk times and places for future crimes. In contrast to current technology that simply maps previous crime data, the new package helps to enhance traditional intelligence-led policing with modern day **predictive policing**.

“In the old days, we relied on how fast you could get to the scene and hopefully catch the perpetrator in the act; and if not, we relied on old-fashioned detective work” says Palm Beach Gardens Police Chief Stephen J. Stepp. “Now, crime analysts using sophisticated software handle the intelligence side of it, weeding out who didn’t do it and who could have possibly done it, through the use of real-time crime pattern analysis and computer technology.”

Using the new software, our crime analysts will be able to digest data from hundreds of crime reports, prison-release notifications, inter-agency correspondence, social media and more, and from that not only identify suspects and where they might be found, but **predict where the next crimes are likely to occur**. Officers can then be briefed at roll-call on the highest-probability “hot spots” and then devote extra patrol to those areas. These proactive measures can be key to preempting crime in our community.

The Foundation also made a **\$10,000 Grant** to the Department for the purchase of a **new K9**. One of our four canine Officers retired last month, and as is always the practice and a token of appreciation, his dog was sold to him by the City for \$10.00. These dogs and their handlers develop a very special bond since they often spend more time together than the handler does with his family members. Once the Officer retires, the dog continues to live as a member of the handler's family.

The Foundation feels that having a K9 unit within our Police Department gives the community more security and a quicker response. The lives of our Police Officers are also in less danger when a canine can be sent into the unknown instead of the Officer. While each of our four K9s is trained in patrol, two of them are additionally trained in **drug detection** and two are additionally trained in **explosives detection**.

The Foundation is **very appreciative** of the donations which come from both our residents and our businesses and thus allow us to make these grants to the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department.

Tom Murphy has been president of the Palm Beach Gardens Police Foundation, Inc. since its inception in 2007. Before helping to form the foundation he was a marketing executive with the IBM Corporation and earlier a member of the Nassau County (NY) Police Department.