

Monday, December 22, 2008



Paducah solves four cases in its first month

A new Paducah Police Department computer program is helping detectives track down stolen merchandise that has been taken to a pawn shop.

The five Paducah pawn shops enter transaction records into a password-protected system at **leadsonline.com** to electronically submit the serial numbers of items bought or pawned. Police then compare them to a national database of stolen merchandise.

"This is very handy since a lot of (thieves) know we're going to check pawn shops here," said Connie Waldrige, clerical specialist in the police department's criminal investigations division.

Police can also check to see what any McCracken County resident has pawned recently, since they must submit their driver's license number to do so. The program even includes digital pictures, addresses, birthdates and driver's license numbers of those selling merchandise to pawn shops.

Since implementing **LeadsOnline** last month, the program has been instrumental in solving four cases, Waldrige said.

Detectives in the McCracken County Sheriff's Department, Ballard County Sheriff's Department and Metropolis (Ill.) Police Department have all asked Paducah police to check listings for some of their cases as well, Waldrige said.

The police department pays \$3,000 yearly for the program, but determined it had been costing \$4,500 in officers' time to pick up paper copies of pawn records from the shops weekly for comparisons, Waldrige said. The system is free for the pawn shop owners to use.

Since items sold at a pawn shop must be retained for only five days, the quicker processing time also allows police more opportunities for recovering stolen goods.

"I would (previously) look through each page by hand, trying to find each item," Waldrige said. "That would take a considerable amount of time."

Tyler Cryts, owner of Cash Express Pawn on South 3rd Street, said he likes the program and that it is easy to use.

"It's a good system for the community and for us as well," he said.

He credits the program for helping improve pawn shops' reputations.

"Nobody likes to ever take anything that was stolen or have things stolen and not be able to find them," Cryts said. "Years ago pawn shops were known for that kind of stuff. However, that has changed, and it helps deter criminals wanting to bring stolen items to a pawn shop. That helps give us a much better image than pawn shops have had in years past."

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