



POLICE CENTRAL

DISPATCH

Houston County (MN) Sheriff Implements New Law Enforcement System February, 2007

Prior to retiring, Sheriff Darryl Peterson of Houston County, MN wanted to “leave the department in better shape than he found it”. The Houston County Sheriff’s Office is located in Caledonia, MN in southeastern Minnesota. Caledonia is surrounded by some of the richest farmlands in Minnesota and bordered on the east by the Mississippi River and its beautiful hardwood covered bluffs.



Before retiring, the replacement of their computer software was high on Sheriff Peterson’s list.

Together with Mark Schiltz, the Houston County Jail Administrator, they went on the hunt with Schiltz leading the way. “We had a couple of old, separate programs that did not talk to each other” he said. “And, due to their age, we were increasingly concerned about support, and frankly, their continued operation”. While seeking new software alternatives, they discovered Police Central.

“Even though we are a smaller county, we have all of the needs of our larger cousins” said Schiltz. “We run a jail and are mandated to operate in a safe manner for both inmates and staff, and to keep accurate records. We also serve Warrants and Civil Papers, as well as respond to Incidents throughout the County. Both the Sheriff and I agreed that we needed an integrated system that would grow with us for a long time.”



Police Central visited the Houston County Sheriff’s office to discuss their needs. Among the requirements was interfacing of any new system into the

Minnesota Statewide Supervision System (S3) that reports all inmate detentions to the State. Additionally, the State collects Criminal Warrant information. And, Schiltz wanted to participate in the Minnesota Mugshot Repository of Arrested Persons (MRAP) and submit arrest information and Mugshots to the State. “So, we had a pretty extensive list of features and requirements before we could consider any new system”

said Schiltz. “In addition, with a new Jail facility replacing our existing Jail built in 1875, we had to be sure to keep the County Commissioners informed and ask for their help and participation. Equally important, we wanted one, integrated system” .

“We felt that we wanted to install new software before actually moving into the new facility” said Schiltz. “That way it would be one project out of the way. But we wanted to make sure that when we do move, that we will just have to add the new facility Jail Cells and we would be ‘good to go’”.

Police Central visited Houston County three times to review needs and demonstrate the system to the Sheriff’s staff and Commissioners. Since Police Central already had the required state interfaces up and running in other Minnesota locations, the County proceeded with negotiations with Police Central for software to do Jail Management, Criminal Warrants, Civil Process, Citations, Evidence & Property, Sex Offenders and Incident Reporting. While Police Central was already doing Incident Reporting in several states, the Company was not currently doing reporting in the State of Minnesota.

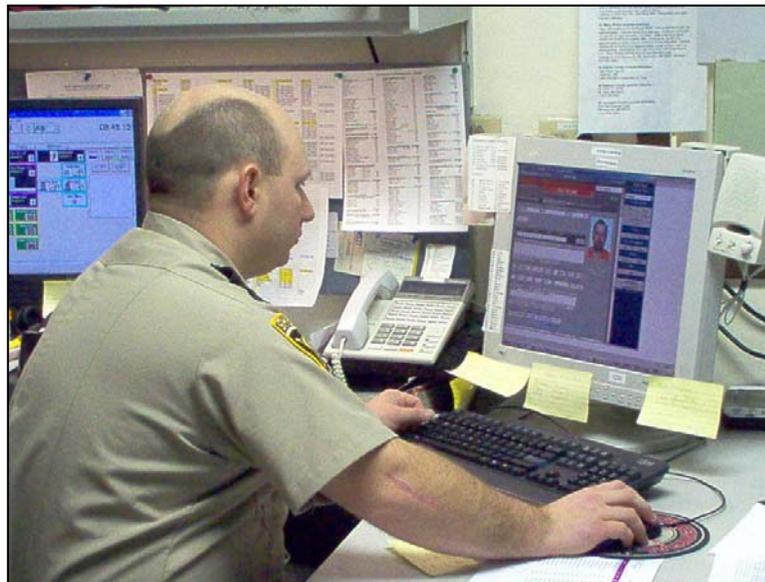
“The creation of an Incident Report was not a problem, but Police Central would have to write, test and certify the filing of incident summary data with the State of Minnesota” said Jim Martin, the CEO of Police Central. “We have to do this in every new state, so the work was not unknown to us, but we have to create the submission software. Houston County is working with us to jump through all of the State hoops, and we will add automated submission to their system soon” he said.

The next issue involved money. “Our initial pricing was too much for the County at the time” said Martin. “But we have a special program called the “Police Central Small Agency Credit Program” that essentially provides a credit to the County that effectively reduces their cost for new software.

“We wrote a brief letter to Police Central requesting they consider us for their Small Agency Credit. It resulted in substantial savings to the County, and allowed us to buy everything that we needed. We would not have been able to afford it without that Credit” said Jail Administrator Mark Schiltz.

Schiltz added “Our County Commissioners were great. They understood the problems with our old computer system and helped us with funding. We also got the cooperation of the Houston County Human Services Department who loved Police Central’s Medical Screening and record keeping. It was truly a cooperative effort in between lots of people in Houston County and Police Central. We got it done, and we are proud of the cooperative spirit”.

In the midst of this process, Sheriff Peterson was retiring and the election was looming. When the results were in, a new Sheriff, Douglas Ely, was elected. “One of the first things we did was brief Sheriff Ely of our plans” said Schiltz. Recognizing that



their old system was inadequate and that their new jail facility was coming, Sheriff Ely enthusiastically endorsed the project. “Having good records and integrated data makes life so much easier. The new system allows me to concentrate on Law Enforcement and the new Jail” said Sheriff Ely. “One of the things I am most excited about is the Evidence & Property Module. For the first time, we have a solid system that will track our Evidence and build the Chain of Custody. We will be so much more professional when we go to court” said Sheriff Ely.

“Our County IT staff bought us a new server, but we were able to use all of our other existing PCs” said Schiltz. “Our IT guys were great, and got everything ready for the installation. Police Central installed both a Training Site and a Live Site, so we can continue training our staff without polluting our live data. As expected, we had a few potholes to patch during training, but the Police Central staff could connect to our system from Atlanta, and their support staff has been terrific. The last thing to add to our system is the submission of Incident Reports to the State, and Police Central is working with the State and we will see it soon”.

The only thing shocking about the installation was the weather. Mark Schiltz and Sheriff Ely “arranged” lovely weather of -20 degrees (on the thermometer) plus a nice wind. “I knew I had to spend a week in



February in Caledonia for their training. But I did not anticipate the weather: It took ‘til noon for me to thaw out each day” said Martin (who lives in Georgia). “Needless to say, it stayed below zero until the day I left town. It has been in the forties since”.

“Seriously”, said Martin, “training went really well. We started training on Monday planning to ‘Go Live’ on Thursday. But we actually went Live on Wednesday. We had the usual bumps, but they got resolved and we have been running well since”.

Using the Police Central system, an Incident Report is created that may include the arrest of persons. Police Central automatically creates a personal “Jacket” for that person, containing names, aliases, biographicals, etc. about the person. If arrested, that person’s Jacket is automatically retrieved from the system during the Intake process at the Jail, and Mugshots, charges, and housing is added to the Arrest Record. Houston County will also do a comprehensive Medical Survey and Classification of the arrestee, and their property will be

inventoried in the system. Police Central will track all inmate movements during incarceration, including Court appearances and Medical appointments. Finally, all required Detention information will be automatically forwarded to the State of Minnesota automatically. Upon discharge, the Inmate’s Jacket and history is retained by the system to be recalled as necessary.

Convicted Sex Offenders will also be entered into Police Central. The County now will have complete computerized records of these Offenders, and full history of their periodic registrations. Other applications include misdemeanor and traffic citations. The result is a single integrated system that contains all known Law Enforcement information about a person -- all contained in their software “Jacket”.

Warrants and Civil Process also participate with Police Central Jackets. So if a person is to be served a Civil Paper, Police Central will inform the Deputy if that person also has any Outstanding Warrants -- thus contributing not only to efficiency, but Officer safety as well. “Police Central will also inform our Deputies if a person has other Alerts, including threatening behavior, known to carry weapons, or other conditions” said Sheriff Ely. “This helps us have better informed Deputies. Also, if we have a Mugshot of a person, Police Central automatically attaches it to the Warrant record. This really helps us identify people”.

“We are not quite ready for Computer Aided Dispatch” said Sheriff Ely. “But once we get into our new Jail, we intend to look at adding that into our system. That would give us a completely integrated system, starting with the Call for Service, Incident Report, Warrants, Civil, Jail Management and Evidence. Police Central allows us to build toward that goal. Eventually, I am confident that the Police Departments in our county will connect to our system to share information”.