

Heartland Helps New Whiteland Police Keep Community Safe

Bank provides funds for new cameras and electrostatic dust print lifter



Heartland President Steve Bechman and Charlana Fenwick, Manager of the New Whiteland location, present a check for the purchase of cameras and equipment to New Whiteland Police Officers Joe Rynerson and Jared Donica and Chief Ed Stephenson.

Have you ever been in a fender bender and wished you had your camera with you? Or, have you been disappointed that the camera on your phone can't properly document the accident? Imagine being a police officer and running into this problem 10 times a day. That's what it was like for the New Whiteland Police Department before Heartland Community Bank donated the funds necessary for the department to purchase eight digital cameras and carrying cases, one for each officer, along with memory cards that can hold up to 3,900 photos.

These aren't just any cameras. The cameras have a panoramic feature that can allow officers to connect up to three photos together for one panoramic view of a crime scene. Recharging and battery headaches are over as well, with the new cameras now in place. Each camera automatically recharges when it's connected to an officer's computer, even the computer in the squad car. Officers no longer need AA batteries, which is better for the environment, the department's budget and the officer, who may run out of batteries during an important accident investigation.

Today, digital photographs are essential for investigating and prosecuting crimes. "I win more cases with photographs," said Detective Sergeant David Glaze, who does investigations for the New Whiteland department. "I'm your crime scene guy," he said. Photographs allow Glaze to show juries, insurance companies and any interested parties exactly what occurred, laying out a timeline of events and evidence.

Heartland also helped the department purchase an electrostatic dust print lifter—a high-tech machine that analyzes dust for impressions. In short, the machine grabs dust through static electricity and puts it on mylar paper where it is kept for officers and other experts to analyze. The machine can lift dust prints from a variety of surfaces, regardless of whether they are horizontal, vertical or curved, and can even locate dust impressions in a darkened room through the use of an oblique light.

"In my 10 years of detective work, about 75 percent of my cases were solved through footprints, but we couldn't pull them from carpet. This new device will change that," said Glaze. Think about that in terms of a victim who claims her attacker is violating a restraining order. It's one person's word against another if that attacker isn't caught in the act, but if the officer can lift a footprint off the victim's carpet, then it's another story altogether.

Locating and recovering tire tracks and other obvious kinds of evidence are not usually the problem in a crime scene investigation. The not-so-apparent impressions are the ones that are difficult to locate. Oftentimes, they are also accidentally damaged or completely missed during the investigation. "This print lifter is an extremely helpful tool for us," said Glaze.