



# ***PALM BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT*** ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR FORENSIC SCIENCE INNOVATION (Palm Bay)—The Palm Bay Police Department has earned international recognition after being presented with the “August Vollmer Award” for Excellence in Forensic Science by a Law Enforcement Agency. The award was presented to Chief Bill Berger at the recent International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference in San Diego for the LODIS project. LODIS is a first of its kind Local DNA Indexing System. Through a partnership with DNA:SI Labs in North Carolina, Palm Bay developed a significant database comprised of DNA profiles from local offenders committing common property crimes. The database has yielded hundreds of matches and has solved a number of crimes that normally would have gone unsolved. “The most unique aspects of LODIS are that it is a patrol-based program and results are returned within days and weeks, not months and years,” said Major John Blackledge, the Department’s project manager. “DNA is collected by the patrol officers and the results are reported back to them directly.

Probably the most significant is that officers are notified by email when there is a match and can view the results from their laptops right in their patrol cars. There is nowhere else in the world where this is done, except here in Palm Bay.”

Blackledge credits LODIS as contributing to a reported 22% decrease in Palm Bay crime as documented in the first six months of the Uniform Crime Report. The decrease is a comparison of the first 6 months of 2007 to 2008. During the same time period Palm Bay saw an estimated 60% reduction of property loss.

In 2006 DNA:SI Labs selected Palm Bay PD from a list of other agencies from around the country to try the unprecedented experiment. Since, the North-Carolina based lab invested more than 2-million dollars of “in-kind” lab services and countless hours to develop LODIS. “Until LODIS, DNA was primarily used as evidence in court to confirm other investigative processes that tend to be less

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reliable and not scientifically sound,” said Chief Berger. “We have put DNA on a fast track so that we can use it early in an investigation to identify criminals who commit our most common property crimes. Without DNA:SI Labs this project would not have been possible. This is a perfect example of a private-public partnership where everyone wins, except the criminals.”

To recognize efforts and the project’s success Mayor John Mazziotti issued three proclamations recognizing the DNA:SI staff including, Mike Burrows - DNA:SI Director of Development, Dr. Joe Chimera- General Manager, and William Britt, the owner of the lab who approved the project.

The Vollmer award is named for one of the first Police Chiefs to serve as President of the IACP in the early 1900’s. Vollmer was a pioneer of early law enforcement in California and was responsible for many innovations that improved the capability of police to fight crime. The Vollmer Award was one of two awards the Department received for its work in partnership with DNA:SI Labs. The Department also received runner up recognition for LODIS with the IACP/Choice Point Excellence in Criminal Investigations award.

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