



The Center For

Law Enforcement Technology, Training, & Research

Provider of the Florida Integrated Network for Data Exchange & Retrieval



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Happy Holidays from LETTR

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We here at the Center for Law Enforcement Technology, Training, and Research would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the law enforcement agencies and FINDER users who continue to make this information sharing project one of the largest and most successful in the nation. As you'll read in the following

sections, 2008 has been a year highlighted with new developments, expansions, and overall success, success that would not have been possible without the support of each agency and user. As this year draws to a close, we would like to wish you all a very happy holiday season and all the best wishes for a wonderful New Year!



Year in Review: Highlights from 2008

The year 2008 offered many highlights. This year, the Law Enforcement Data Sharing Consortium, along with the Center for Law Enforcement Technology, Training, and Research (LETTR) and the FINDER system, saw many tremendous successes, advancements, and improvements. Of primary note, this year brought the creation of LETTR. Establishing LETTR was important in that it provided an "owner" for the FINDER system; in essence, ownership of FINDER was transferred to LETTR with direction of the system remaining with the Consortium. The creation of LETTR has not only provided a home for FINDER but has also afforded its continued expansion. For example, this year alone, we had over seven new agencies join the

Consortium and had over twenty-four agencies whose data was parsed for the FINDER network. Further, we saw the whole of Region 5 fully connected in two-way information sharing. Along with the addition of new agencies and new data, this year LETTR moved into its new office. With this space, the LETTR development team has a more high-tech area in which to enhance FINDER. The facility also offers a new meeting center for various functions. For example, along with a new meeting room for Consortium meetings, LETTR is now able to offer training and workshop events for law enforcement agencies, the first of which was the Crime Analysts Summit, a workshop hosted by LETTR for crime analysts from local, state, and federal agencies. The

LETTR team has also worked this year to offer several new conveniences for our members, the first of which was the creation of a new LETTR website. This site is host to information about LETTR, FINDER, and the Consortium and helps to keep our law enforcement members updated on current activities. Along with the new website, LETTR also began publishing a newsletter this year. This newsletter was created as a way to highlight various agencies and their successes and to keep our members informed with various articles, announcements, and tips. Finally, another convenience, one that has been highly anticipated by our more distance law enforcement agency members, was the introduction of the new webcast for the *(continue on page 3)*

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—Detective Terry Kip, Manatee County S.O.*



Notes from the Consortium Meeting

At the last Consortium meeting, held on December 2nd, the current Chairman of the Consortium, Jim McClure, opened the meeting by first welcoming those members who "attended" the meeting via the new online webcasting feature. McClure then began the discussion of the primary item on the agenda: voting for the Consortium's new Chair, new Vice Chair, and new Secretary. Joe Hellebrand, Chief at the Melbourne Police Department and current Vice Chair of the Consortium, received the nomination and unanimous vote to become the new Chairman. Chis Parker, Lieutenant with the Collier County Sheriff's Office, received the nomination and unanimous vote to become the Consortium's new Vice Chair. Finally, Mary Falstrom, with the Seminole County Sheriff's Office, received unanimous vote to

retain her position as Secretary of the Consortium. McClure then went on to discuss the next agenda item: various enhancement to the FINDER system. The details of the enhancements, including an expungement tool, performance upgrades, format changes, and more, were discussed with the members. It was stressed that, in order to receive the benefits of these enhancements, each agency must be "touched" by the FINDER development team. If, when you log into FINDER, you do not see the "Version 4.0.10." on the login page, you need to contact the LETTR office at 407-882-1590 to discuss updating your version of FINDER. Agencies must also contact the LETTR offices if they have not yet completed the "critical update" needed to correct an undocumented Microsoft issue. Without this critical update, agencies will

see the "Agency Unavailable" notice for any queries in which "all agencies" are selected. The next agenda item discussed was the mention of the new MOUs for Region 5. Currently, thirty of the eighty agencies in Region 5 have already returned their MOUs to the LETTR office; if you have any questions as to the status of your MOU, please contact Lynn McCullough at 407-882-0549. McClure also noted that those agencies outside of Region 5 will be receiving their new MOUs in January. Finally, McClure announced that, for the second year in a row, the Law Enforcement Data Sharing Consortium, along with FINDER, has made it to the second round of considerations for the Innovations in American Government Award granted by Ash Institute at Harvard University. See the minutes in full at www.LETTR.org.

Spotlight Agency: Manatee County S.O.

Terry Kip is all too familiar with property crimes. As a detective with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office Property Recovery Unit, Kip has worked with the investigative bureau on property crimes for 22 years; during the past 12 years, he has been specific to Pawn investigations. Now, as a FINDER user, Kip is finding that the system is helping to increase his successes. "In all of the time [that I've been working in property investigations], the FINDER system has provided the best results with matching pawns to theft and recovering stolen prop-

erty," say Detective Kip. "We have experienced tremendous success in matching pawn data to theft cases using the system. Pawn files are delivered to my office via email on a daily basis and they can be imported to the FINDER system quickly. I have most of the pawn records available to me within 24 hours of a pawn transaction. Now, I'm finding property and matching cases faster than I can work them." To Detective Kip, the benefit of FINDER to law enforcement is its ability to reach out across jurisdictional bounda-

ries; an aspect that Kip thinks can be enhanced by more agencies joining. "FINDER like any other data based investigative tool, is only as good as the data in it. The more agencies in the surrounding areas that can put data into the system, the better the query tool can be. The potential is very high to have a great tool that can benefit so many and help us all to work together. Our criminals are not staying in any one jurisdiction these days. This could be a great way to help keep track of them and their adventures."

"Tagging" To Help Measure FINDER Success

Success Tagging is an option that allows users to highlight information from FINDER that was helpful to them in their investigations. Essentially, Success Tagging is a form of notification in the FINDER system; here, users can indicate when they've found a report or information that was beneficial to them. When a user "tags" a report, this aids in the collection of empirical data which then tracks how well the FINDER system is working. Success Tagging also provides agencies the opportunity to document the number of cases in which FINDER

has been an asset; this then supplies statistics that help Chiefs and Sheriffs gauge the cost/benefit relationship of information sharing. Further, Success Tagging allows the LETTR team to pursue funding opportunities, offering hard data as to the successes that the users are finding with the system. Those users who have tagged their successes in the past have reported that FINDER has assisted them in making arrests, recovering stolen property, recovering stolen vehicles, generating investigative leads, locating witnesses, finding deadbeat par-

ents, and disqualifying potential employees, just to offer a few examples. While the issue of Success Tagging has often been discussed, it's important to remind users that, with the "Success Tagging" feature in FINDER, this system is one of the only information sharing systems in the nation that attempts to quantify a user's success. In short, when users tag their successes in FINDER, they are providing data that acts as a measure of success, not only for the FINDER system itself, but for overall law enforcement information sharing state and nationwide.



2008: A Year of Success for LETTR, FINDER

consortium meetings. The web-casting ability allows our members to view the Consortium meetings remotely through a secure session via the LETTR website. Members that log in to view the meetings are able to both see and hear the meeting host; see the powerpoint presentation being displayed to the audience; and ask questions via a chat room. Along with the conveniences of a new website, a new newsletter, and a new web-conferencing element, the year also brought new en-

hancements to the FINDER system itself. These enhancements included new features, such as an expungement tool and a user query count for administrators; fixed some existing system bugs; offered several cosmetic changes to FINDER; and offered performance enhancing features, namely speed, to the backend of the system. Further, the development team enhanced the PawnSuite software to include the collection of metal recycling information in order to meet the state's new mandate.

While 2008 has seen many impressive changes and developments with both LETTR and FINDER, perhaps the most impressive illustration of our continued success came from the users themselves. Using data from the Success Tagging feature, users from 25 different law enforcement agencies from around the state have logged 556 successes in FINDER this year. These success tags included 121 arrests being made and over \$141,000 in stolen property being recovered.

In 2008, using data from the Success Tagging feature, users have logged 556 successes in FINDER.

Behind the Scenes: Leen Hanayneh

The development team of FINDER attracts the best and the brightest. Leen Hanayneh is no exception. Leen will be graduating this month with her masters degree in Industrial Engineering/Engineering Management. Last year, Leen was attracted to FINDER after a colleague introduced her to the project. "I thought it would be a good opportunity to invest my potentials and to gain some practical experience in integrating and sharing data." Leen further states that she was attracted to FINDER's concept of integra-

tion. "The world is becoming 'flat' and technology is being integrated into almost all of our daily activities. In my opinion, LETTR, by developing the FINDER system, is using this enormous technological transformation to benefit law enforcement by providing an application for sharing data to sustain and to promote public safety." As a member of Product Lifecycle Management Research Group at UCF, Leen has been studying organizational integration; she is

currently working on building a system that facilitates data sharing between different CAD systems. What Leen most enjoys about her time with FINDER is working with the development team. "LETTR has a fun and diverse working environment that is built on team work and collaboration. I believe that all of us here at LETTR and on the FINDER development team, through hard work and dedication, have made great contributions to help LETTR meet its visions of success."



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The Center for Law Enforcement Technology, Training, & Research (LETTR) is a Florida, not-for-profit corporation. LETTR was formed in September 2007 by the University of Central Florida and members of the Florida Law Enforcement Data Sharing Consortium to consolidate the intellectual property and other resources associated with FINDER, the Florida Integrated Network for Data Exchange and Retrieval. FINDER is a set of computer applications that enable automated information sharing between police agencies.



**For comments or story suggestions, please
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