



The Center For

Law Enforcement Technology, Training, & Research

Provider of the Florida Integrated Network for Data Exchange & Retrieval



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Notes From The Consortium Meeting

During this month's Law Enforcement Data Sharing Consortium meeting, Agent Jim McClure updated the members on activities relating to FINDER and to LETTR. Agent McClure opened the meeting with updates on member agencies. Sumter County is now live on FINDER and includes the Sumter County Sheriff's Office

along with the police departments for the cities of Wildwood, Bushnell, Webster, Center Hill, and Coleman. Agent McClure also welcomed Sarasota County, who has joined as a new member agency. New member activities in Region 5 include the addition of Brevard County School's District and School Security agency as a

query node and Apopka police department. Next, McClure detailed the need, for those agencies who have not already done so, to contact the FINDER development team in order to complete the critical update installation; currently, 10 agencies are lacking the necessary critical update and, as such, they are limited (*continue on page 3*)

Meet The Program Director Of LETTR

Within the realm of law enforcement information sharing in the state of Florida, agencies have no bigger advocate than that of Agent Jim McClure. McClure has been one of the greatest driving forces behind FINDER, the Law Enforcement Data Sharing Consortium, and the Center for Law Enforcement Technology, Training and Research. McClure was one of the founders of the FINDER system in 2003 and has since worn the hats of agency representative for the Orange County Sheriff's Office, Chairman of the Consortium, and Program Director of LETTR. Some of Agent McClure's typical duties include overseeing FINDER's development team, conducting state-wide FINDER training, presenting monthly Consortium meetings, managing the federal and state grants that are awarded to FINDER, and supervising the daily operations of the project. Agent McClure

has had a 26 year career in law enforcement and has served with the Orange County Sheriff's Office since 1987. His law enforcement duties have included patrol, traffic enforcement and traffic homicide investigations, robbery and property investigations, and information management services. Agent McClure currently works through the Sheriff's Intelligence Division and Fusion Center command; he is also a Certified Bomb Technician assigned to local and regional hazardous device response teams. When asked what attracted him FINDER, Agent McClure stated that, "As a law enforcement officer and one of the founding contributors to the design and development of FINDER, I shared the vision of being able to electronically connect law enforcement agencies to share RMS data. The idea of forming a consortium of agencies, by leveraging re-

sources at the University of Central Florida for the initial development, produced a logical and cost effective way of accomplishing our goals. Having a system designed by law enforcement for law enforcement, with no ties to a particular vendor, was an interesting concept." According to Agent McClure, the greatest contribution of FINDER to law enforcement is its ability to "revolutionize" the investigative process. "Getting the RMS data from multiple agencies to the investigators, using a distributed format with no warehousing, has increased efficiency and has provided a tangible cost benefit to participating agencies and to the public. Investigators are solving crimes and identifying suspects by using FINDER, which prior to its advent would not have been possible." Through his years of involvement with FINDER and (*continue on page 2*)

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LETTR's Program Director: Jim McClure



now LETTR, Agent McClure feels that his greatest contribution to the project has been his ability to act as a liaison between the Consortium and LETTR. Agent McClure states that, "When LETTR was formed, it was decided that the Data Sharing Consortium would be represented on LETTR's Board of Directors. This was to ensure that the interests of law enforcement were adequately represented. I was appointed to the founding LETTR Board of Directors as the Consortium's representative. While severing on the LETTR Board, the collective suggestions from the Consortium's members were conveyed through me to

the other LETTR Board members. My acting as a representative, along with participating in the establishment of a sound organization with my fellow LETTR board members, is my largest contribution to the LETTR board." Agent McClure foresees great advancements for FINDER and for LETTR. "The Center for Law Enforcement Technology, Training and Research has the potential to spring board into a national resource. Having the FINDER system, a model for law enforcement data sharing, as well as the other developments like the NCFS program used nationally by Medical Examiners, is

proof of LETTR's credibility. LETTR has shown to law enforcement, and to others, that developing technological solutions for public entities does not have to cost billions of dollars. The willingness of the University of Central Florida (UCF) to continue its partnership with LETTR, allows us to bridge the academic, public, and technology voids often found in profit making ventures. This continued partnership will certainly contribute to the growth of LETTR and to the success of UCF by applying research and development efforts towards developing useful and practical public agency programs."

*"FINDER is used daily to gain any intelligence regarding persons, vehicles, and property from other jurisdictions that may be related to offenses committed in Collier County."
-Lt. Chad Parker*

PawnSuite To Include Scrap Metal

On October 1st, new legislation designed to cut down on the state's growing number of metal thefts, went into effect. According to the law, recycling dealers in Florida are now required to collect records on those who attempt to pawn metal. The legislative action, included in bills

HB 105 and SB 1306, requires that recyclers collect thumb prints, identification, and persons information on anyone who attempts to pawn metal at local recycling shops. Anticipating this new legislation and the new data that it will produce, the development teams of Pawn-

Suite and FINDER have been working to include this data set in the systems. Currently, PawnSuite has been updated to accept manual entry of this new data while the development of the electronic entry piece is being finalized. FINDER will be accepting this new data by years end.

Spotlight Agency: Collier County S.O.



The Collier County Sheriff's Office has been a member with FINDER since 2004. In that time, FINDER has become a resource to the daily operations of the agency. According to Lt. Chad Parker, "[In our agency] account users are mostly detectives, crime analysts, and criminal research investigators. FINDER is used daily to gain any intelligence regarding persons, vehicles, and property from other jurisdictions that may be related to offenses committed in Collier County." When asked what he finds most useful about FINDER, Lt. Parker states

that "I like having the ability to cross-reference persons, vehicles (including tags), and property with other agencies through FINDER without having to call several law enforcement agencies. This expedites the process; detectives used to have to call several law enforcement agencies and speak with several persons in order to learn whether or not they had any intelligence of value." Lt. Parker further elaborates that "FINDER is a very cost effective way of sharing law enforcement information with sister agencies. It would be a tremendous asset if all

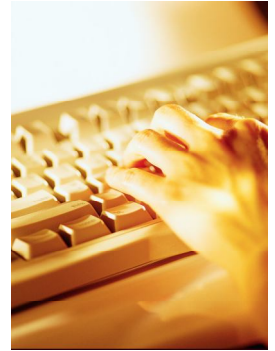
law enforcement agencies within the state of Florida participated in one data sharing project such as FINDER. This would greatly enhance law enforcement's ability to recover stolen property; to locate suspects, witnesses and victims; to conduct crime pattern/trend analysis; to gather intelligence regarding persons who may have escalated their violence toward law enforcement and the public; and to streamline the time spent trying to gather intelligence regarding cases under investigation. [Within law enforcement], knowledge is power."

“Wildcard” Option Helps When Querying FINDER

The FINDER system is built for querying information; whether using the “Persons and Vehicles” module or the “Pawn Data” module, all users are familiar with the basics of building a FINDER query. However, what may not be routinely known is a feature called the “wildcard” option. Within FINDER, there are two places where “wildcard” options can be used. The first wildcard is automatically used in every FINDER search field. This is a hidden wildcard and means that if, in the vehicle tag search field for example, a user types in a

partial tag number beginning with 123, the FINDER system will return results on anything beginning with the original search parameter (123) and will also include any record that contains information following to the right of it, such as 123abc, 123def, or 123ghi. In this case, the user will get returns on anything the system finds that contains the leading information entered by the user. However, there is a second wildcard option that allows the user to get returns when he/she only knows an ending sequence. In this case, the user must activate the

wildcard by first typing a percentage sign (%) in any search field followed by the known search terms. So, for example, if the user knows a person’s last name ends in “son,” the user would type %son in the last name field. The FINDER system will return results on anything ending with the original search parameter (son) and will also include any record that contains leading information, such as Jackson, Johnson, or Mickelson. The wildcard feature is just one more tool that aids users in successfully querying and obtaining records from FINDER.



Updates From The Consortium Meeting

in their sharing capabilities through FINDER. The next item of business that was discussed was the issue of metal theft. FINDER, with PawnSuite, is currently being updated to meet the new legislative mandates requiring recycling dealers to collect information on those attempting to pawn metals. Agent McClure also recently attended the IAPCI Conference in Orlando where he presented the FINDER system to an interested audience. McClure

then updated the members on the issue of gun records. As per the last meeting, gun records are still showing up in FINDER because they are being mislabeled as “articles” by pawn shops; we are currently working with the state and NRA to pass legislation that would not hold agencies responsible if pawn shops mislabel electronic gun records. Next was the mention of new MOU’s which will be coming for Region 5; grant money for region 5 will help to

cover membership dues. The issue of holding “virtual meetings” was then discussed. Currently the development team is working to make the Consortium meetings available over the internet; members can login during the meetings to see them live. Finally, Agent McClure held a brief discussion on new officers for the Consortium; McClure will soon be vacating his current position. To see the minutes in full, please visit www.lettr.org.

The development team is working to make the Consortium meetings available over the internet.

Behind The Scenes: Ashar Ahmad

The development team at LETTR is comprised of some of the brightest minds in computer engineering. Ashar Ahmad is one such associate who has helped to shape the FINDER system into one of the leading law enforcement data sharing applications in the country. Originally from Pakistan, Ashar came to the University of Central Florida to major in computer science. While working on his masters at the University, Ashar was introduced to the FINDER project and was interested in aiding in it’s develop-

ment. “I thought that FINDER was technically challenging; it was a project that I wanted to join.” Ashar’s experience in software design was an asset to the development team; he has worked on projects both locally and in Pakistan, including the development of “Eye Watch,” a system used by the Ministry of Interior in Pakistan to manage licenses of private security agencies, and “SAGE,” a waste management system in use by Brevard County. Now with FINDER, Ashar’s role includes assisting in

the development and the design of the 4.0 series. Having been with the FINDER project for almost four years, Ashar sees the connectivity of law enforcement agencies as FINDER’s greatest benefit. As Ashar states, “FINDER allows law enforcement agencies to gain easy access to data from all over the state and this tremendously improves the functionality of their agencies.” Ashar adds, “It is satisfying to know that I am doing my part to make the world a safer place.”





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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.



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