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Video surveillance provides safety for residents, aides in dispute resolution and deters crime — all in the least possibly intrusive manner.

Case Study: Securing the Future at Youth Villages

By Sara Hoare

Since its inception over 20 years ago, Youth Villages has been providing guidance for troubled children and their families through an array of rehabilitating services including in-home counseling, residential treatment facilities, and adoption and foster care programs. A non-profit organization, Youth Villages boasts 41 facilities spanning six states where children are treated for behavioral problems, substance addiction, and overcoming physical or sexual abuse.

In the past, surveillance systems proved to be an invaluable tool at two of their facilities, so when funding finally became available to provide cameras at additional locations, the Bartlett, TN campus was first in line. As a residential facility, this campus primarily treats children with emotional and behavioral problems.

Cameras were required in six residential cottages and a school on the grounds. Crescent Communications, a Certified Vicon Dealer, had previously been contracted to perform work at another Youth Villages location, unrelated to CCTV. John Holland recalls when he was first made aware of their interest in a camera system. "When I heard they were looking for CCTV, Mike Rose (the local Vicon Territory Manager) was the first person I called. One of the things I like most about Vicon is that I don't have to be an expert on all the products. I just call Mike and I can get a walk through and site survey done and the system designed for us right away."

Given the nature of the application, Mike's challenge was to design a system that would provide the information they needed in the least intrusive manner. Since the system would be monitored 24 hours a day, impact-resistant VC-600WIR infrared mini dome cameras were installed in the sleeping rooms so that clear images could be seen even in

complete darkness. Nicole Gebke, CMSW, Director of the Bartlett campus, has been pleased with the performance of these cameras, especially when used in conjunction with the motion detection features of the ViconNet software. "I love it," she said. "I love the quality of the video. I can see kids at night in dark bedrooms and we can trace an area on the screen around their bodies to detect any movement."

Additional infrared camera models VC-620 and VC-621 were installed throughout the campus, as well as VC-600 mini domes. Local viewing and control from each of the cottages is accomplished via Kollector Pro Digital Video Recorders. A fiber network was installed across the vast campus to bring all video signals back to the Kollector Elite Hybrid Digital Network Video Recorder, which acts as the head-end workstation for the entire facility. Fiber NTSC links with multiplexed outputs allow real-time video from all cameras to be viewed in administration without interfacing with the monitoring ability of the local managers on site. Nicole explains how they view all locations remotely. "Our Crisis Team monitors all cameras from one main console and can react immediately if there is an incident. It's like having an extra set of eyes."

If an incident should occur, the ability to easily playback the recorded video is something Nicole truly appreciates. "Before we had the camera system, it was difficult to resolve disputes and verify what actually happened. This makes it easier. Recently, there was an incident where two boys were fighting, but they claimed it was only horseplay. I was able to review the video with them so they could see what I saw. It helps the kids understand how others perceive their behaviors."

The camera system also serves as a deterrent to prevent future incidents. "Having the system protects the staff and the kids, plus it

helps to keep the kids in balance. Everyone knows it's there. It's a matter of prevention versus reaction," Nicole adds.

Both Crescent Communications and Mike Rose from Vicon have trained Nicole and the staff at the Bartlett campus on the operation and features of their new surveillance system. John Holland with Crescent is thankful for the close relationship he has directly with Vicon. "The training and support we have received has been phenomenal," he says.

While Nicole admits that her crisis team members and managers are the primary users of the system, she is happy that she can access it at her convenience. "The software is easy to navigate," says Nicole. "I like that I can watch the cameras from my office. I can go on my computer anytime to and make sure that someone is manning the system."

The Youth Villages campus in Bartlett, TN is truly a unique application for a surveillance system. It is utilized for security, resolution of disputes and prevention of incidents, but the primary purpose of this system coincides with their goal of helping everyone involved with their organization to work toward a brighter tomorrow. "At Youth Villages, we're all about learning," Nicole says proudly. "We use the system as a teaching tool for both the staff and the kids. We can point out positive behaviors as well as areas that may need improvements. It helps us to see what we can do better next time. It's not just about watching and monitoring, but using what you have."