

Gus Helps Plant City Police Get Big Grant

On Friday, Gus presented the Plant City Police Department (PCPD) with more than \$131,000 in federal funding specifically requested by the Congressman for the purchase of crime fighting technology, including digital cameras and laptop computers.

These federal funds were included in recent federal spending legislation signed into law in December 2007.

The improved technology will enhance the Department's ability to fight crime and keep the community safe. For instance, the state-of-the-art, high-resolution, digital cameras will help police officers gather and better document photographic evidence at crime scenes and traffic-related incidents, while the laptop computers will be used to provide officers in the field remote access to the Department's integrated computer networks.

PCPD Police Chief Bill McDaniel told the Plant City Courier and Tribune that the whole Department will benefit from this funding.

"Each officer will have one [of the digital cameras]," McDaniel said.

The rest will go toward upgrading laptops in patrol cars that are part of the department's computer-aided dispatch system. About 20 of the department's laptops will be upgraded to allow officers to operate them by touching the screens, an innovation that will enhance safety, McDaniel said.

"It gets the officers eyes off the keyboard," he said.

Touch-screen technology will be phased in as funding allows.

The department made the switch to computers in 1998, resulting immediately in a quicker response time on dispatched calls.

"We literally went overnight from a paper-based system to this," McDaniel told Bilirakis as he gave the Republican congressman a tour of Plant City's sprawling police headquarters.

The grant funds are allocated through the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Law Enforcement Technology Program, whose mission is to advance community policing in all jurisdictions (especially smaller ones) across the United States.

For more information about the COPS Program, log on to <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/>.