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As Student, Stigler Puts Studies into Practice

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Ask just about any CHDS graduate, and they'll say a prized byproduct of a degree from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security is seeing their classroom concepts bring new life to their work world.

Waukesha (Wis.) Police Department Deputy Chief Mark Stigler has seen some of the fruits of his studies implemented – just halfway into his CHDS coursework.

"Theory and debate are futile unless they result in affirmative action in the real world," said Stigler, who was just promoted to his current rank this month. "This program has far exceeded my expectations in that regard. It has acted as a guiding path toward a desired future we are all working for – a prepared, resilient and secure homeland."

Core CHDS classes in technology and critical infrastructure have translated into three areas of police practice in the city of 70,000. Intelligence-led policing, sharing and receiving information with Wisconsin's two fusion centers, teaming with fellow CHDS students to analyze protection of the city's water system, and a high-tech surveillance system in the city's vibrant downtown have all been implemented thanks, in part, to a push by Stigler.

Like many localities, the Waukesha police were frustrated by a lack of connection with fusion centers. After hearing the complaints, Professor Robert Simeral challenged his class to reach out to these fusion centers. Stigler noted.

"He had a point," Stigler explained. "After that, we decided to visit our state and local fusion centers and talk to them about what both the producer and the consumer of intelligence needed and wanted."

Now, fusion center intelligence bulletins are assessed and distributed to detectives and line officers on a daily and weekly basis.

These alerts have proved valuable on many occasions. One recent example was a fusion center alert regarding a chemical in large commercial devices that could be altered into an explosive element. As it happened, Waukesha has several large producers of those devices and that bulletin spurred further investigation to determine whether additional protective measures were necessary, Stigler said.

That kind of relationship with state fusion centers will also help further the Waukesha Police Department's burgeoning effort into intelligence-led policing (ILP), an adjunct to community oriented policing. The department began that quest with help from another CHDS student, Cmdr. Cheryl Wade of the Ventura (Calif.) Police Department, who shared how her department implemented the ILP approach.

"We're attempting to follow a similar model," Stigler acknowledged. "Although our police department is of a modest size, ILP can greatly benefit not only our city but the surrounding county as well."

The crime analyst function of the ILP can help by organizing, evaluating, and distributing intelligence to those who need it and can use it, he added.



On another front, the department last fall installed pan-tilt-zoom cameras in its downtown business district, a concept discussed during Technology for Homeland Security class.

The program, dubbed "OptiCop," allows video to be wirelessly transmitted to the city's server where it is recorded. The live video is fed into the police and fire communications center where it is displayed on large video screens.

The cameras have had a noticeable impact.

"The drug dealers who once operated in parts of the coverage area have left and not returned," Stigler noted. "We have seen them come out of a building and look up at a camera, then dart back inside – they know the cameras are watching 24-7."

Since the cameras were installed just about six months ago, more than a dozen criminal actions or arrests have been retained on video, Stigler stated.

And, despite some initial concerns in the business community that the cameras would give the perception the area was not safe, there have been no complaints since the cameras began operating.

In 2010, plans are to expand the system to include other important areas of the city. Also, the city is considering bringing in private sector partners as well as a local university's public area cameras to integrate into its system.

Meanwhile, Stigler and a team of fellow CHDS students (Assistant Chief Russell Accardi of the DelRay Beach (Fla.) Fire Department and Coast Guard Commander Malcolm (Rob) McLellan) are taking knowledge gleaned from studying critical infrastructure protection and applying it to a survey of Waukesha's municipal water system. The students are using the Critical Accessibility Espyability Redundancy (CARVER)and Model-Based Risk Assessment(MBRA) methods to look at critical links, nodes, and hubs to determine which are most vulnerable and how to better protect them. This information will be part of a report during their next in-residence. And it will be shared with water managers in Waukesha.

The technical and policy education at CHDS have brought immediate fruits to Stigler, but he believes the biggest benefit of the program is learning to think critically about emerging issues.

"Going through the CHDS master's program has been like an awakening; giving me an entirely new outlook on homeland security that can be directly applied to my community," he said. "It has given me a new, holistic perspective of the most urgent public safety and homeland security issues facing our country."

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