



Local News

Elkhart County reinstates victim alert system

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By Emily Monacelli, Reporter

ELKHART -- The Elkhart County Sheriff's Department is reinstating a service that allows people to track the whereabouts of someone who's been arrested locally.

The department announced it is partnering with Louisville-based Appriss to provide a local victim alert system called VINE, which stands for Victim Information and Notification Everyday.

People can sign up for the system by visiting www.vinelink.com or by calling 866-959-8463, and can register using a phone number or an e-mail address.

Participants can enter an offender's name and will be notified if that offender is released, transfers from, escapes from or dies in the Elkhart County Jail.

The county had been using the system until June, when the Indiana Department of Correction switched vendors.

That new system worked with Department of Correction facilities, but did not work with local jails, Sheriff Brad Rogers said.

Appriss has agreed to provide the system for free for Elkhart County for two years. Rogers said sheriff's department officials and Appriss are looking for grants that would continue the funding.

Rogers estimated it costs \$500 a month for this service in Elkhart County.

Elkhart County is the only one in Indiana using this system, said Richard Boone, an Appriss account executive.

Amy Bechtel, who oversees the victims assistance program for the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney of Elkhart County, welcomed the system being reinstated because crime victims and their families can track an offender from the time that person is arrested until he is released.

Bechtel said about 500 people in Elkhart County used the Appriss program when it was here before. She said knowing that information is "empowering victims with information that they wouldn't otherwise have."

The Office of the Prosecuting Attorney's Victim Assistance Division is available for people who may feel unsafe after an offender has gotten out of jail, Bechtel said.

More information can be found by visiting www.elkhartcountyprosecutor.com or by calling 523-2237.

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