

New Website Helps Crime Victims Track Offenders

April 12, 2011 12:51 PM

By Holly Wagner, WCCO-TV

MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) — Victims of crime often feel forgotten, after the criminal has been locked up and officials move on to other cases.

But on Tuesday, an effort has begun to do a better job of keeping victims — and their families — in the loop.

Jon Cummings lost his son, Phillip, after he was hit and killed by a drunk driver when he was 23 years old. The driver spent five years in prison. Now, thanks to a new website that tracks offenders, Cummings and his family have peace of mind.



He said there's a comfort in being able to know where that person is, after they're released.

"Information is power and it gives you a sense of sometimes of control. I can't emphasize how important that is," he said.

Cummings thinks this new website will give all crime victims peace of mind.

The website is called Minnesota Choice. It's a way for victims, people who witness crimes, or who have been affected by a crime to keep track of offenders who are in jail or in prison.

Minnesota's Department of Corrections and Public Safety launched the site. It updates in real time the status of offenders, whether that be a change in custody, if they're released, transferred or picked up.

State officials have been testing out the website for a few months now and officially decided to launch it this week in coordination with Crime Victims Awareness Week. It was paid for by a federal grant.

Before the website, victims were kept up-to-date by paper. The site makes the process easier and faster — and it's also reduced the workload for the people handling the information.