



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Status:

Laureate

Year:

2013

Organization Name:

Alabama Computer Forensics Institute

Organization URL:

www.whoswatchingalabama.org

Project Name:

WARN Project

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:

Safety & Security

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

The ACFI launched an effort in 2008 to assist law enforcement with the gathering of criminal data associated with crimes against children. The effort focused on criminal activity within the state of Alabama. While documenting and processing digital evidence for state law enforcement units, ACFI began to notice patterns and trends among the datasets. Using a series of analytic and modeling tools, ACFI began to map areas of criminal activity, in particular, areas where crimes against children were prevalent. ACFI concentrated its community outreach and training efforts in those areas, offering assistance with free educational programs. The WARN project assists law enforcement and child advocates in the identification of trends and patterns of emerging criminal behavior directed

towards Alabama's youth. In doing so, we endeavor to equip first responders with a tool that helps reduce nefarious activity.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

WARN began in 2008. The effort received a major update in August 2012, when the Alabama Computer Forensics Institute launched a new mapping and data visualization tool. The tool offers a discrete view into the trends and patterns observed through the large data sets. Employing automated triggers, notification of areas of concern are sent to participating agencies.

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

No. The project will continue to develop as access to more data is granted.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

In our immediate service area, we have witnessed a decline in reported internet crimes against children, despite the national trend that suggests an increase. A letter of support from Alabama's Attorney General, Luther Strange, mentions that "Alabama is a safer place because of the efforts of your group to equip Alabama's law enforcement with cutting edge assistance."

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

Yes, I would describe the effort as a best practice. Most states have scores of silos of data available related to criminal activity and behavior. A careful review of the data and proper use of tools, one could offer a new view on trends and behaviors, fostering a best practice for data management. Thorough, exhaustive use of available resources can cultivate meaningful information; with the proper technology components those data elements become invaluable information.



If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)

The effort was the result of a careful observation from a group of dedicated technologists. Years of digital forensics work have crafted a delightful staff that advocates for safe technology use among our youth. Through their work to protect Alabama's youth, a keen observation led to an insightful review, fostering a meaningful use for existing technologies as an enabler, equipping law enforcement with a proactive tool.