

Catching up with technology: Bethalto PD receives technology training grant from West Star

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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BETHALTO - With the pace of technology growing exponentially, the Bethalto Police Department is playing catch-up with many law enforcement bodies across the country. In January, under the leadership of former Bethalto Police Chief Greg Smock, the

department was able to purchase a \$6,000 Cellebrite cellphone forensics machine from their annual budget.

This will be the third machine purchased by the department. Current Bethalto Police Chief Craig Welch said the former two machines are "bricks," adding the life cycle of such technology is a little over six months. Coupled with the expense of this machine, which Welch said was necessary for several cases, is the need for training and certification, which can cost upwards of \$4,000.

"Unlike computers, different cellphones have all kinds of operating systems," Welch said. "These machines are able to keep up with all those different ones and keep up ahead of the times."

That hefty price tag was covered by a grant from aviation maintenance firm West Star, a national company with a location at St. Louis Regional Airport on the border of Bethalto and East Alton. West Star Aviation President and COO Rodger Renaud said the grant was part of the company's belief in giving back to communities.

"We wanted to give back to the community, and we thought, what a better way than helping law enforcement?" Renaud said. "We decided this grant may do the most good if it went to law enforcement."



Welch said the machine will greatly help the community. He said as many as 100 cases require the use of cellphone forensics, including drug rings, homicides and child exploitation, which was the crime cited by the FBI when Madison County States Attorney Tom Gibbons when he pushed for local law enforcement to attain these machines in 2008.

Bethalto is one of the few departments with this updated technology in the Riverbend. Other agencies include Alton and Glen Carbon Police Departments as well as the Madison County Sheriff's Office.

Detective Jordan Lind has completed 40 hours of training on the machine. Lind has been with the department for four years with two of those years in investigations. Welch said Lind came to the department with a background in digital forensics.