

[<< Back](#)

Crime Stoppers Hands Out \$578,000 in Grants

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By Smita Kalokhe 13 News Running away just got a little tougher for criminals in Northern Illinois. Rockford Crime Stoppers doled out more than half a million dollars to police agencies across Winnebago County. That's a lot more money than the usual total. Crime Stoppers normally gives out 50-thousand a year. But they made an exception for a few very critical and expensive programs. "It's a 186-thousand dollar piece of equipment!" says Winnebago County Sheriff Richard Meyers/ With a financial helping hand from Crime Stoppers, The Winnebago County Sheriff's Department will soon mount a forward-looking infrared device, or FLIR, on the LEAC helicopter. Crime Stoppers Board Chairman John Lichty says, "Helicopters are fantastic, helicopters with FLIR are priceless." LEAC is a not for profit group that operates and maintains helicopters for local police agencies to use. That FLIR can see in the dark using the heat that a person or object gives off. "When flying over a cornfield," Meyers says, "if there lost child in a cornfield, we pick up the body heat." "In the dark, you can see the footsteps of an assailant who is leaving a crime scene," says Lichty. He says Crime Stoppers distributes money based on where it'll help the most, not just on the size of an agency. But the largest grant recipient was the Rockford police department. Over the next three years, it will get \$350,000 for video surveillance equipment. Lichty says, "The effectiveness of those cameras is amazing. They can pick up the license plate from 4-5 blocks away. There's multiple cameras, scanning an area that no one has any idea what that radius is or what that distance is." Crime stoppers also passed out 17-thousand dollars to students studying for law enforcement careers.



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