

## Technology helps keep track of suspected offenders

By Lori Caldwell

**GARY** — The first time a burglar is arrested isn't usually the suspect's first venture into the world of crime.

And thanks to a computer system already in place through the Lake County jail system, Gary police can track some offenders who continue their criminal ways.

"It saves you time and valuable resources," Herb Smith, president of ICU Court Monitoring, told Gary police commanders in a meeting last week.

Smith and Deputy Chief Michael Mallett said some of the burglary suspects recently featured in a *Post-Tribune* page of mug shots are using court-release monitors.

Smith will provide the department with access to the system that monitors the location of defendants awaiting trial or serving a sentence on house arrest.

"If they go outside the house, we get an alarm and we know exactly where they are," Smith said.

Instead of posting bond, some defendants agree to participate in the electronic monitoring program, wearing "a full-blown computer on their leg," Jason Gilbert, representative of Satellite Tracking of People LLC, told the group.

Once it is installed in the home, the monitor will activate if defendants stray beyond their approved locations.

Gilbert demonstrated the path of one man who was required to visit Smith's office last week. The map showed

a trail from the man's home to Merrillville and back.

Police have received more than 2,200 burglary reports this year, but solved only a small percentage.

A burglary task force began additional patrols last week, and police have arrested suspects daily.

"Residents are helping us by watching out for their neighbors and giving us good descriptions of suspects," Detective Pete Baum said as the meeting with Smith concluded. "We need their help as much as they need ours," he added. Baum and Sgt. Brian Farrow investigate burglaries exclusively.

Smith and Jason Gilbert demonstrated how police can use the system for crime scene correlation.

By typing in the address of a burglary and a time frame, investigators will see any offenders who were in that area.

Smith said Hammond police arrested a man who was leaving his home to go to a gas station at the same time every night. "He was dealing drugs," Smith said. "And the police had the evidence they needed."

Information from the monitors is generally accepted in court proceedings, Smith added.

About 70 offenders are using the system, but that number changes regularly. As Lake County officials work to decrease the jail population, Smith expects more will be added.

