



RCPD's Social Media Efforts Earn Agency International Recognition

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RILEY COUNTY, Kan. (WIBW) -- The Riley County Police Department continues to interact with citizens and solve crimes through social media and their unique approach has other law enforcement agencies taking note.

TechBeat, an award-winning news-magazine of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system, featured RCPD's Twitter efforts in their latest publication in an article titled "Tweeting your way to better community relations," showing how the department has used social media to humanize police and improve relations with those in the community they serve.

RCPD is also currently the featured agency on the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Center for Social Media web page. The International Association of Chiefs of Police is a major resource center for law enforcement agencies and

advocates the use social media to enhance public relations, educate the public and investigate crimes.

Officer Matt Droge is the Public Information Officer for the Riley County Police Department and handles the agency's social media accounts, with the help of several other officers. Droge says they traveled to Kansas City, Missouri to see how police there used social media and then tailored those best practices to meet the RCPD's needs and goals.

The department is active on Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest, notifying citizens about crime alerts, road closings, accidents, community events and dangerous weather conditions, and to ask for citizens' help in solving crimes. Police have posted surveillance photos of unidentified suspects photo and asked for the public's help in identifying the individual. Droge says citizens' tips have led to solving several cases, the majority of which involve theft.

The department holds regular Twitter question-and-answer sessions for the public, and periodic "Tweet Alongs," during which everything that happens during a patrol officer's shift is tweeted as it occurs, giving followers an "inside look" at police work and the happenings in their community. The officers use humor and a casual tone in their messages. Droge, who has been dubbed the "Twitter Cop," says he posts the things he would say on his own personal social media accounts because it makes him, as an officer, more relatable. On Facebook, he often posts officers' accomplishments and good deeds. Now, even dispatchers are posting information about accidents and detours to inform followers.

When RCPD first started their push to use social media more, they had 53 Twitter followers. Now they have nearly 5,000. In the past month, their Facebook fans have increased from 300 to 1,000. RCPD has actively assisted other local agencies with their social media accounts, meeting with Topeka police and Fort Riley police to show how they can use social media to their advantage and share information.

To measure their effectiveness on social media, Droge says the department looks at the population of Manhattan and Kansas State University combined and the equivalent of 6.3% follows them on Twitter. That's compared to the 0.8% equivalent that follows the NYPD and the 0.2% that follows the FBI nationwide. Baltimore PD has a following equivalent of 5.9%, he said. Compared to other major agencies, RCPD has a large percentage of the population they serve following them.

"We're really proud to be recognized," Droge said. "This is great because it is recognition for doing a good job but it's also offering us the ability to assist other law enforcement agencies."

To connect with Riley County police via social media, you can follow them on Twitter (@RileyCountyPD) or find them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/RileyCountyPD).