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Thursday 23 August, 2001 Home > News > Content



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General News

Township turns to technology in effort to protect life rings

By:Ronda Howell

August 20, 2001

Protecting the lives of young people is at the heart of a recently completed project on the White River side of the White Lake channel.

"After the young man (Chris Smith) drowned last fall, I began doing a little research," said Holly Hughes, a White River Township trustee. "I've talked with people up and down the Great Lakes and I know that the White Lake area isn't the only harbor town facing a dilemma with life ring thefts."

Hughes said although she found a lot of dead ends in her search to find a theft-proof solution for rings at the White Lake channel, she never gave up hope.

"I knew that there had to be a way to alert someone if a ring is stolen, whether it is a microchip in a ring that can be tracked by GPS (global position satellite) or something else," she said. "I knew I couldn't figure out how to do it, but I knew someone who could."

Tim Korthase, of Top Rail/PowerLink Plus in Montague got a call from Hughes asking him to do some research on a solution.

"We're doing a similar project for the Mackinac Bridge Authority," he said. "After looking at a lot of possibilities, this was the project that made sense for this location."

Korthase said six of the life rings on the north side of the channel wall are connected through an electronic wire. PowerLink Plus donated the labor and equipment to install and bury the line.

The three rings on the outer jetty wall are equipped with a wireless monitoring system, he said.



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