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NEWSWIRE

Northside ISD hopes to expand video system

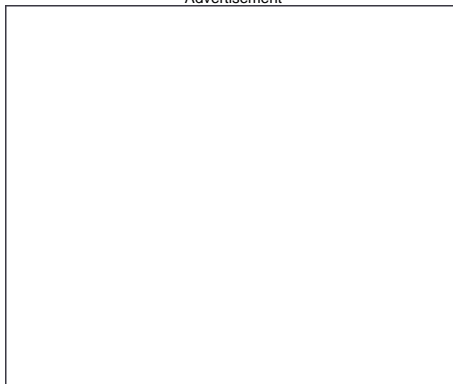
By Jennifer Keirn - 02.05.2007

SAN ANTONIO--In one of the largest installations of a digital video surveillance system in the education sector, Northside Independent School District recently implemented an IP-based system in its 10 high schools that integrated 1,200 cameras and 1,500 access control devices.

Now, with sustained community support for the project, Northside ISD is going back to the voters this spring to ask for an additional \$12.6 million to expand the system to the district's 16 middle schools. If the measure passes, it will bring to 5,000 the number of surveillance cameras district-wide.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

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At the core of the solution is a software package developed by LenSec of Houston, Texas, integrated with Axis Communications' cameras and infrared motion detectors, glass break sensors and card readers from Open Options. The level of integration that Northside was seeking seemed initially like "a pipe dream," said LenSec CEO Keith Drummond, but they got it -- a system that pulls together video surveillance, security and other facility alarms, badging systems and their employee active directory across campuses with a single login.

"Before this project, we were using 1980s technology to monitor each campus," said Lt. Brad Mills of the Northside ISD police department. This included some closed-loop video monitoring, motion-sensor alarms and a manual-entry badging system, he said.

But in this huge school district spanning 355 square miles, 112 facilities and 82,000 students, "that's physically impossible to cover with our staff of police officers," said Mills. "We have every kind of problem you can imagine, from assaults and thefts to graffiti and drugs."

Using IP technology allows both police and school administrators to monitor any camera, at any time and from any computer, even from home if an alarm goes off at night, Mills said. But the benefits to using this technology don't stop there, according to Drummond.

"Customers like the video quality and what you can do with the video footage," he said. "You can print it, save a clip to your desktop, email it or burn it to a disc if it's needed as evidence."

Mills hopes the improvements in student behavior and the the 30 percent overall drop in calls for police service, he's seen since the system was implemented will influence voters positively this spring.

"Nobody has complained once they've seen what this system is doing for us," said Mills. "We now have a bigger bag of tools to help these kids be successful."

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