

## CASE IN POINT | Tennessee Youth Villages Campus



Video surveillance technology from Vicon includes infrared cameras (middle right) and impact-resistant mini-dome cameras (far right), which are monitored from a central command center (far left).

### Video is used as a tool for both security and teaching at children's facility

By Sara Hoare

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, Youth Villages has been providing guidance for troubled children and their families through an array of rehabilitating services including in-home counseling, residential treatment facilities, and adoption and foster care programs. A non-profit organization, Youth Villages boasts 41 facilities spanning six states where children are treated for behavioral problems, substance addiction, and overcoming physical or sexual abuse.

In the past, surveillance systems proved to be an invaluable tool at two of their facilities, and when funding finally became available to provide cameras at additional locations, the organization's Bartlett, Tenn., campus was first in line. As a residential facility, this campus primarily treats children with emotional and behavioral problems.

Cameras were required in six residential cottages and a school on the grounds. Crescent Communications, a Certified Vicon Dealer, had previously been contracted to perform work at another Youth Villages location, unrelated to CCTV.

Given the nature of the application, the challenge was to design a system that would provide the information they needed in the least intrusive manner. The system would be monitored 24 hours a day, so impact-resistant VC600WIR infrared mini-dome cameras from Vicon were installed in the sleeping rooms so that clear images could be seen even in complete darkness. Nicole Gebke, director of the Bartlett campus, has been pleased with the performance of these cameras, especially when used in conjunction with the motion detection features of the ViconNet software. "I can see kids at night in dark bedrooms and we can trace an area on the screen around their bodies to detect any movement," she says.

Additional Vicon infrared camera models VC620 and VC621 were furnished throughout the campus, as well as VC600 mini domes. Local viewing and control from each of the cottages is accomplished via Vicon's Kollector Pro digital video recorders. A fiber network was installed across the vast campus to bring all video signals back to the DVR, which acts as the head-end

workstation for the entire facility. Fiber NTSC links with multiplexed outputs enable real-time video from all cameras to be viewed in administration without interfering with the monitoring ability of the local managers on site. "Our Crisis Team monitors all cameras from one main console and can react immediately if there is an incident," Gebke says. "Before we had the camera system, it was difficult to resolve disputes and verify what actually happened. This makes it easier.

"Recently, there was an incident where two boys were fighting, but they claimed it was only horseplay," she continues. "I was able to review the video with them so they could see what I saw. It helps the kids understand how others perceive their behaviors."

The camera system also serves as a deterrent to prevent future incidents. "Having the system protects the staff and the kids, plus it helps to keep the kids in balance," Gebke adds. "Everyone knows it's there. It's a matter of prevention vs. reaction."

While Gebke admits that her crisis team members and managers are the primary users of the system, she is happy that she can access it at her convenience. "I like that I can watch the cameras from my office," she says. "I can go on my computer anytime and make sure that someone is manning the system."

The video system's primary function is security, resolution of disputes and prevention of incidents, which coincides with the Youth Villages' goal of helping everyone involved with their organization to work toward a brighter tomorrow. "We use the system as a teaching tool for both the staff and the kids," Gebke says. "We can point out positive behaviors as well as areas that may need improvements. It helps us to see what we can do better next time. It's not just about watching and monitoring, but using what you have." **STD**

*Sara Hoare has more than 10 years experience in the security industry. She has been on the Vicon Industries sales team since 1999.*