

EXECUTIVE Q&A: CHIEF RICHARD DRUMHELLER OF POTTSTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT



At CODY Systems, we believe that our software is only as good as the men and women who use it. In this Executive Q&A, we talk to Richard Drumheller, Chief of Pottstown Police Department. Pottstown PD is currently sharing data in real-time with the Berks County COBRA.net information sharing network, powered by CODY software.

CODY: Where did you grow up?

CHIEF: I was born right here in Pottstown. My family moved to Boyertown when I was in third grade, and I graduated from Boyertown High School in 1976. I've lived in this area my entire life.

CODY: Where did you attend college?

CHIEF: I attended Albright College in Reading, PA and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree and am proud to have graduated with honors!

CODY: Did you always want to pursue a career in law enforcement?

CHIEF: When I was a kid, I loved watching the TV show Hawaii Five-O. I watched how Detective Jack Lord worked with his team to bring down the 'bad guys' and thought that was something I wanted to do one day. Then, as a young man, I reviewed a recruitment pamphlet from the PA State Police and thought, "I can do this."

CODY: When did your career in law enforcement begin?

CHIEF: My career began when I was hired by the Pottstown Police Department full time on November 15, 1988. Since that day, I have served in every division (except K-9) and have served in every rank in the department. I became Chief of Police on May 8, 2013 and will eventually retire having spent my entire career serving and protecting this community.

CODY: What other Law Enforcement organizations are you affiliated with?

CHIEF: I am currently a member of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association as well as the International Association of Chiefs of Police. I also serve as Treasurer for our SWAT team and the Negotiation Commander for Montgomery County SWAT-Western Division.

CODY: What crimes are most prevalent in Pottstown?

CHIEF: Drug trafficking, alcohol crimes, and property crimes rank high on the list.

CODY: How is crime in Pottstown influenced by crimes happening in surrounding towns and counties?



Chief Drumheller (center) joins CODY President, Fran Heffner, and CODY EVP, David Heffner, at the SmartCEO Cornerstone Awards in Philadelphia, honoring CODY's commitment to supporting local law enforcement through use of its technology.

CHIEF: Crime and criminals don't know borders. We are constantly tracking criminals across township and county lines. We recently conducted a long-term investigation of two major gangs who were involved in dangerous gun-fighting over drug trade. The investigation spanned three counties and numerous municipalities. Criminals don't care about geographical boundaries.

CODY: Pottstown's neighboring counties of Berks, Lehigh, and Chester each share countywide crime data through CODY's COBRA data-sharing system. Late last year, CODY worked with Pottstown PD to grant the PD search access to Berks County's COBRA system, with plans to eventually link-in with Lehigh and Chester. How has this access to real-time crime data changed the way you do business?

CHIEF: Access to this wealth of data and criminal information has made it possible for detectives and investigators to track criminal activity between Pottstown and Berks County as criminals move outside of Montgomery County. My detectives use CODY's C.tac software [the COBRA search app] to track known drug offenders as they move between counties. This is something we had to do over the phone prior to us getting connected to the Berks COBRA system. The information we have access to now is invaluable.

CODY: How does having access to this information augment or enhance an officer's ability to prepare for encounters with the 'unknown'?

CHIEF: I often say that we are only ever as good as the tools we have in our toolbox. Police do not like the unknown. Having access to the advanced, countywide information that



Mark Flanders, Pottstown Borough Manager, and Chief Drumheller with the CODY team.

this link to the Berks COBRA provides us takes the mystery out of the unknown. Before having access to this info, we would typically have to make a number of phone calls to get the information we needed. Now, my officers will use C.tac to drilldown into a suspect before making the calls. They also have access to the information at their fingertips in the car for a quick look up. Information is available to them with just a few strokes on the computer keyboard or clicks of the mouse.

CODY: In addition to access to COBRA, Pottstown PD is also sharing their data with Berks County. What was the process like to make this happen?

CHIEF: We worked with CODY and folks at the Berks District Attorney's Office and developed a good business relationship. We had some discussions about how to make it happen, but once a plan was formulated, the actual implementation was fast and the data began to flow almost immediately.

At first, my officers were a little reticent to step out of their 'comfort zone' to get used to the new technology. But, once they recognized the benefits of the new software and how it could enhance their daily work, it was a no-brainer. Plus, it is easy to use.

CODY: Are you able to share a specific instance where this technology helped solve a case, track a criminal?

CHIEF: I was speaking with a friend of mine who is in law enforcement outside of Pottstown. He noted that during an investigation, he used data supplied from Pottstown to assist him in reaching a resolution.

Our detectives are constantly using and relying on information supplied by other jurisdictions. The data supplied by others is many times the most valuable in helping to get a complete picture of a suspect.

CODY: In addition to access to COBRA, what other ways is technology helping you and your officers fight crime?

CHIEF: As we invest in and implement newer technology, it makes more information available instantly. It's all about having the information in real-time to make quick decisions and know that the information you are looking at is the most current and up-to-date info. We have automatic license plate readers that read thousands of plates a day.

We are also in the process of installing community cameras that will watch areas of Pottstown Borough in real-time. In a sense, it is like having a patrol officer monitoring a specific street corner 24/7. All these measures are taken to ensure the continued safety of folks living in and visiting our Borough.

CODY: How important is public-safety information-sharing in terms of citizen safety and awareness?

CHIEF: Our citizens expect my police department to work in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies to solve crimes. They expect our officers to have all available information on a criminal, regardless of where the information is stored. Information sharing, joint investigations and round table meetings are part of the communication process.

Pottstown PD also has a strong social media presence to keep our community informed and in communication with our officers on a daily basis. Through our social media and other meet and greet discussions, we stay engaged with the citizens in our community by offering crime tips and by sharing information regarding ongoing investigations that we feel the community has an interest in and has a right to know.

CODY: Obviously, being Chief of Police comes with a large dose of stress, but could you share some of the most rewarding moments you've experienced? Maybe even something fun about the job?

CHIEF: My goal has always been to try and remain grounded while I've served in law enforcement. It is very difficult at times, but I have always strived not to let the weight, worry, and stress of the job get me down. I have been sure to remain involved in the community in ways that bring joy to my life.

For twenty-five years, I have served on the Board of the Pottstown Police Athletic League. That was a very rewarding experience and allowed me to help others reach their potentials in sports and in life. There is nothing more rewarding than watching young people grow, learn, and achieve their goals.

My son also played baseball in PAL and it was such fun watching him grow and achieve. What great memories!



To learn more about this project, please feel free to contact the Chief at :

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