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## Holden News February 8, 2007

### NESPIN aids local theft investigations with database by Alicia Bessette [abessette@holdenlandmark.com](mailto:abessette@holdenlandmark.com)

Investigators can search for and locate materials stolen from Holden at the touch of a keyboard, thanks to an online pawnshop database.

All Worcester pawnshops keep registers of sellers and buyers, explains Holden Police Chief George Sherrill. Until recently these registers were handwritten in ledgers, forcing officers to drive from shop to shop to collect information. But now, all pawnshop transactions are recorded electronically and submitted to Worcester police at the close of each business day. The transactions are viewable on a secure Massachusetts and Rhode Island police database kept by NESPIN, New England State Police Information Network. Transactions are searchable by item and name.

"We can see who from Holden is buying and selling," Sherrill said. "Recovery in other towns has been tremendous," especially Auburn, Charlton, Shrewsbury and Spencer.

He added that because break-ins in Holden are down, investigators haven't yet solved specific Holden cases with the pawnshop database. But detectives Al Bourget and Chris Carey use it



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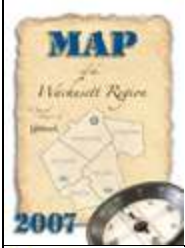


weekly. "It's a huge, huge time saver," Sherrill said.

NESPIN is a resources, services and information center operating out of Franklin, and all Wachusett towns are members (Worcester recently joined, making the pawnshop database especially useful.) NESPIN is funded by the Department of Justice, and about 760 New England police agencies on both the local and state levels belong.



Holden became a member after Paxton Police Chief Robert Mortel was killed in Holden in 1994. For the benefit of judge and jury, Bourget asked NESPIN to prepare large charts detailing break-ins on South Road, one of which Mortel was responding to when he was shot.



Charts such as those, pictorially explaining crime scenes or timelines, have evolved over the years and are among NESPIN's analytical services.



NESPIN also performs forensics analysis of computers for hacking or pornography cases; provides police departments with money for ongoing drug investigations; and loans high-tech surveillance equipment for catching criminals in the act. A few years ago, a tiny hidden camera helped Holden police nab a smashand grab thief targeting vehicles parked in the Trout Book lot; NESPIN supplied the camera.



"NESPIN is very cost effective," Sherrill says. Towns pay a nominal fee based on the number of fulltime officers on staff. Holden is charged between \$50 and \$100 a year.





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