



EFFINGHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE

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Drone Used to Locate Runaway Juvenile

On Sunday, August 5, 2018 at approximately 2:44 P.M., Effingham Police received a report of a missing habitual juvenile runaway. Bureau of Patrol Officers immediately began searching for the juvenile at several locations the subject was known to frequent.

Around 3:44 P.M., the teenager was spotted running into a corn field. Given the time of day and the high temperatures, the top priority was the safety and health of the juvenile as well as first responders. The supervisor on-scene made the decision to utilize an Effingham Police K-9 Unit to track the juvenile. In addition, a drone (which was recently acquired by the City of Effingham to use for Public Safety purposes) was deployed by Effingham Fire Department personnel. Utilizing binoculars, an Officer spotted the subject exit the field but immediately re-enter the field. The drone was immediately flown to that specific location and located the juvenile. At approximately 5:30 P.M. an Effingham County Sheriff's Deputy successfully contacted the juvenile. Abbott EMS subsequently transported the adolescent as a precaution to HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital for observation.

Chief Jeffrey Fuesting credits the new drone technology for saving time and lessening the risk of weather-related injuries to both the juvenile as well as first responders. "This was the first time we were able to utilize this type of technology. Given the excessive heat of the day, Officers made the right call to use the drone immediately, rather than risk Officers walking through the dense corn field where temperatures could easily top 120 degrees. We are very thankful for the generous donations by community members to purchase this tool for Public Safety use in Effingham."

The drone, which was purchased in May of this year, is owned by the City and requires Certification through the FAA to operate. Licensing and strict regulations from the FAA dictate when and how the drone is to be operated. Currently, there is one department member each from the police department and fire department who completed the 32-hour course and testing process. Chief Fuesting plans to have more Officers complete their certification in the upcoming year in order to better serve the community. "Technology is rapidly advancing, and enhancing the tools and techniques we use as a Police Department allows us to serve the citizens more effectively" stated Chief Fuesting.