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## 15th Annual FARA Training Symposium Held

The False Alarm Reduction Association held its annual international training symposium in San Antonio, Texas from April 5 through April 8, 2011. The Texas alarm associations came through in a big way by sponsoring Texas Day, which allowed more public safety and alarm industry members specifically from Texas to attend. The participation by all attendees was outstanding, and at the end of the week, everyone went home with new ideas to help reduce false alarms. There was wonderful networking, new friends were made, old friends reconnected and feedback on FARA's 15th Annual International Training Symposium by attendees was excellent!

If you were unable to attend the training symposium this year, read through this special edition of the InfoLink to find out what you missed and then use this information to help you gain approval to attend next year's training symposium in Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 1-4, 2012!  The contract has already been signed with the MCM Eleganté Hotel, and the Conference Committee will begin planning the training courses and other events in the very near future.  Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to learn more about false alarm management and how you can assist your department and community in dealing with this issue.  FARA Institute funds will be available to help public safety FARA members attend by reimbursing approved expenses, such as hotel and airfare.  Stay tuned for more information on next year's symposium in future editions of the InfoLink.

## Thanks to Institute Sponsors!

Without the FARA Institute and our generous contributors, FARA training symposiums would not be possible.

Many, many heartfelt thanks go out to all of our Institute donors as follows:



**Platinum** ($3000 or more donation)

**Broadview Security, Inc.**
**National Electronic Security Alliance (NESA)**
**Public Safety Corp (CryWolf)**
**Texas Burglar & Fire Alarm Association (TBFAA)**

| **Gold** ($1000) | **Silver** ($750) |
|---|---|
| Canadian Security Association (CANASA)<br>Installation Quality Certification Board<br>Maryland Burglar & Fire Alarm Association (MDBFAA)<br>Monitronics Security<br>Vector Security, Inc. | DSC |
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# More Thanks!

The FARA Board of Directors, on behalf of the entire FARA membership, extends a huge thank you to all of our event sponsors, who so generously contributed to the success of the FARA Training Symposium. These sponsors/sponsorships are *in addition* to the FARA Institute donations.

- **Vector Security** – Opening Luncheon
- **Emergency 24** – Networking Lunch
- **ATB Services**, **COPS Monitoring** and **Rapid Response Monitoring Services, Inc**. – Breaks
- **BK Companies** - Signs

**Texas Day Sponsors**
- **Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association**
- **Houston Gulf Coast Alarm Association**
- **North Texas Alarm Association**
- **South Texas Alarm Association**

We are very grateful to all of our sponsors, who help FARA provide excellent benefits to symposium attendees, as well as the membership in general. Sponsorship funds allow us to provide meals, break out snacks and other amenities that help keep costs. Thank you for your continued support and participation!

A very special thank you also goes out to **Betty Lou Bell**, who for fifteen years running has so graciously donated incredible amounts of time to manning the registration desk, answering questions, selling raffle tickets and generally keeping the symposium (and Rex!) running smoothly. Your dedication and efforts to assist the membership is greatly appreciated by all!

# Opening Session/Luncheon

Attendees at FARA's 2011 International Training Symposium were greeted with a delicious lunch provided by Vector Security and a warm welcome by FARA's president, **Gerry Miller**. President Miller introduced FARA's executive board along with FARA's generous and supportive sponsors, who provided scholarships for many FARA members to attend the symposium.

After outlining the classes provided at the symposium, President Miller encouraged first-time and repeat attendees to take the opportunity to network and establish contacts, ask questions, share ideas and participate in one of FARA's five committees.

**Tammy Foxworthy** spoke about the raffle and silent auction whose proceeds benefit FARA. Items up for bid were donated by those attending the symposium.

**Kristina Walker** and **Stacey Peacock** presented an overview of the membership committee. They said FARA is as strong as each of its members and encouraged all attendees to promote FARA. Currently, the membership committee is offering incentives for referrals from FARA members. Please contact **Stacey Peacock** at peacocks@barnstablepolice.com or **Kristina Walker** at klwalker@vectorsecurity.com if you know of someone who may benefit from becoming a FARA member.

Each attendee at the symposium bravely stood up in front of the group and introduced him or herself. **Natasha Pitts**, past FARA president then offered some insight on how the FARA expo could best serve everyone and also encouraged everyone to share ideas and how to figure out how to do more with less.

And now the fun was about to begin……..

## Secrets to Get the Most Out of Your Symposium

FARA Co-founder, Past President and current Secretary **Norma Beaubien**, Director with the Montgomery County Police Department, False Alarm Reduction Section in Maryland talked about how and why FARA was officially formed back in 1997; its current structure, philosophy, bylaws and committees. She gave an overview of the symposium and talked about what we hoped all attendees would get out of the training sessions, as well as the networking opportunities that were available. Norma described the FARA Expo and the value of attending, even if you were not in the market for new software.

Associate Director-Fire and former Associate Director-Electronic Security **Kathleen Schraufnagel** with the North Texas Alarm Association talked about the value of forming working relationships with the alarm industry including various local and national associations, as well as with individual alarm companies. She also discussed the benefits of FARA membership including FARA Assistance Requests, which are used to ask questions of the full membership; bulletins and brochures and how others were using them to assist in false alarm reduction; guides, manuals and all other publications available to help do your jobs more efficiently; numerous training opportunities available through FARA; the web site; networking and the mentor program for all new members.

Questions from members were asked and answered. This session provided a great starting point for the rest of the symposium.

## How Burglar and Fire Alarm Systems Should Work

Although burglar and fire alarm systems are different they both can produce false alarms if they are not operated correctly. **Joe Carr** with United Central Control, Inc and **Mike Mahoney**, with Vector Security, Inc led a great hands-on class dealing with how burglar and fire alarms should work.

Joe described the main parts of a burglar alarm system and how each piece of equipment works. He also gave scenarios as how false alarms can happened when the equipment is installed incorrectly or used improperly.

Joe put an emphasis on placement of motion and glass break detectors to avoid false alarms. He also stressed how the Control Panel Standards were revised in 2010 and the importance of having CP01 keypads.

After Joe was done with his presentation we all got a chance to design an alarm system for a floor plan. We were tasked at placing motion sensors, keypads, glass break detectors, and more wherever we saw fit to put them.

**What distinguishes a fire alarm system from a security system?** Mike pointed out that fire alarm system points are all active twenty-four hours a day whereas a security system is armed and disarmed almost everyday. He also advised that a fire alarm system can monitor other systems while not controlling them. Some of these systems that are controllable include the HVAC system, elevators, and fire doors and shutters.

One thing that Mike pointed out that really told the difference between burglar and fire alarm systems was the fact that fire alarm systems are installed, required to be maintained, and tested under specific codes, whereas burglar alarm systems are not.

Mike showed pictures of bad installations, blocked devices, and even a "What were you thinking" to get all attendees thinking.

Each attendee was also afforded the opportunity to see hands on pieces of equipment ranging from key fobs, motion detectors, sirens, and so much more.

If you interested in learning more about fire alarms or need help starting a False Alarm Ordinance in your jurisdiction, feel free to contact **Mike Mahoney**, Vector Security, at mjmahoney@vectorsecurity.com or for burglar alarms **Joe Carr**, United Central Control, Inc at jcarr@teamucc.com

## Are You Certifiable?



FARA Board Member**, Amy Lowe,** Alarm Coordinator from the City of Lynchburg, Virginia and chair of the FARA Certification Subcommittee presented the Professional Certification and Recertification prep class.

The professional certification is awarded to FARA members who pass a two part test.  The first part of the test covers multiple choice questions, true or false questions and fill in the blank questions.  Each question is worth two points.  The second part of the test is essay based where each question can be worth up to ten points.  A total of seventy five points is needed to pass each section.

But not to worry-it's open book!  Amy suggested organizing a binder with your information with dividers, indexes, post-its, etc. and even recommended color coding the FARA guides with one color and the publications with another.

Information for the test can be found on FARA's website www.faraonline.org under *FARA Professional Certification Program,* which lists objectives and rules for the exam.  Material for the test is found in member publications such as guides, brochures, false alarm reduction bulletins, ordinances and public safety tips under the *Member's Only Section*.  Additional information covered on the exam may be found at the following websites:

        SIAC   www.siacinc.org
        PDQ    www.faraonline.org/html/pdq.asp
        IQ      http://www.iqcertification.org

Prepare and study the material and you will be sure to pass.

Once you have passed, you will be recognized as a Certified Alarm Manager (CAM).  The certification is valid for one year.  In order to be recertified you must acquire continuing education credits.  Examples of activities pre-approved for CEU credits include attending a local police or alarm industry meeting, working on a FARA committee, working on a FARA publication or developing a presentation or class on false alarms.  Think you thought of something else?  Let us know so we can add it to the list.  The full pre-approved CEU list may be found on FARA's website.

Amy emphasized the key to becoming a CAM extraordinaire is to study, organize, prepare and recertify.  Having FARA's certification is a great way to show your expertise and to gain credibility.

You may contact Amy at amy.lowe@lynchburgva.gov if you are interested in becoming a CAM or if you have any questions.

## Creative Collections

Collections, no matter how you look at it, seems to be a problem for everyone and finding ways that work is something that we all need help on.

**Angela Mangiaracina**, Alarm Billing Customer Service Representative, with Boca Raton Police Department in Florida, talked to everyone about her experience when she was first hired and how she tackled a $200,000 uncollected debt problem. She talked about how her initial thought was to get rid of the old software that the jurisdiction had been working with and write off all of the $200,000 deficiency but eventually got new software to help with false alarm tracking. She then researched the outstanding fines for residents and businesses. Once a good address was located, the fines were mailed out and she eventually collected about $100,000 of the outstanding fines.

**Karen Hamilton**, with Ontario, advised they suspend service for non-payment and that once the user is aware of this then the fine is usually taken care of.

Some attendees said that they use a collection agency, but when this is done, the collection agencies often tack on twenty five percent to the bill.

**Norma Beaubien,** with the Montgomery County Police Department in Maryland, advised that the County Attorney's Office handles her collections and that she has a 93% collection rate on false alarms, which we all agreed was pretty good.

Another attendee advised that piggy backing off of another department in the government that already uses a collection agency was successful for them.

**Natasha Pitts**, with Spartanburg, advised that her fines, whether they are civil or criminal, go to the courts if they aren't paid.

**Patricia Ball**, with the City of Kirkland, advised that she attaches the outstanding fines to their business license.

**Pam Steiger**, with Louisville Metro Police Department, advised that she sends a warning letter, a thirty day reminder, and then if the account is still unpaid after forty-five days a lien letter is mailed.

Some attendees advised that they are able to have warrants issued for non-payment, attach the unpaid fines to the user's tax bill, and use their code enforcement department or sheriff deputies who are already out serving papers.

To end the section **Rex Bell** said that he uses the method of being nice and that it's amazing how being nice to someone seems to always get the job done.

# What is Going On in the Alarm Industry?

From name changes to rapidly changing technology – that's what is going on in the alarm industry. **Jordan Brown**, President of National Electronic Security Alliance (NESA), led a panel discussion on the changes occurring in the industry today.

The panel also included the following leaders from Texas associations:
- **Chip Bird**, Southwest Dispatch Center, LP
- **Rex Adams**, American Security Devices
- **Mike Schobel**, ASG Security
- **Chris Russell**, Defender Protection, Inc.



New technology has allowed the alarm industry to offer its clients new and improved services such as video verification.

Video verification has become popular with central dispatch solutions but what should be done with this video?  Should the monitoring company request dispatch each time a subject appears on their screens?  Should the video be passed on to the responding officer?  What a perfect world that would be but there is the dilemma of having the compatible equipment.

Another issue is what to do with the video?  Who should have access?  Would the video be able to be used in a legal manner?  Both the alarm industry and public safety will have to keep up with this issue and others that are sure to arise with new technology.

At the moment phone applications are the newest and coolest service the industry has to offer.  The end user has the option to abandon telephone service and use a cell phone or the internet.  However, key pads could become a thing of the past and all applications would be touch based.  This could become a huge potential for false alarms.  On the other hand, an incident may be viewed by the end user first and could cancel the alarm.  Only time will tell which route alarm users will travel and public safety will have to respond or keep up with changes with their ordinances.

Old services vs. new services-it does not matter what technology is being used if not properly installed.  There is a need to make sure technicians are up to date on installation procedures.

Door to door sales have not become a thing of the past and are still very much a part of our summer seasons.  It is beneficial for public safety to work with the industry either through ordinances or state legislature to make sure that all alarm companies comply with the rules.  This would weed out the bad seeds and force alarm companies to do right by alarm users.  Encourage alarm companies that you work with to notify local jurisdictions when they are coming to town.  Raising awareness will serve the alarm user and enhance working relationships between public safety and the alarm industry.

Following the general discussion, **Mike Mahoney**, Vector Security and **Mary Galloway**, DynaFire, Inc. talked about fire alarms.

Burglar alarms are not the only alarms being permitted these days.  Fire alarms have been incorporated into alarm ordinances in many jurisdictions.  The rules for fire alarms can be different.  For example, the NFPA requires dispatch on commercial fire alarms.  Fire alarms also require maintenance upkeep such as cleaning and inspection.  Commercial alarms may not have the same requirements, which can cause an increase for false alarms.  As the industry changes so must the response from public safety.

If you are interested in learning more about fire alarms you may contact **Mary Galloway**, DynaFire, Inc. at mary.galloway@dynafire.com or **Mike Mahoney**, Vector Security at mjmahoney@vectorsecurity.com.

## What's An Alarm Professional To Do?

For agencies and alarm companies that have been working on their false alarm reduction programs for many years, what happens when the numbers just stop reflecting the good work that is being done? **Kerri McDonald**, False Alarm Coordinator with the Riverside Police Department in California, took us on a journey that described innovative ways we can jump-start our programs.

We looked at ordinances; fees, fines and penalties; letters, notices and brochures; education; alarm industry and associations and community outreach. Kerri gave us exceptional ideas and helped us look outside the box with suggestions such as including inserts in utilities and tax bills, including a module on false alarms at the public safety citizen's academy, putting educational information in your community newsletter, and giving speeches at homeowner association and Neighborhood Watch meetings.

Excellent audience participation helped contribute to the success of this course. Additional suggestions included attending National Night Out and County or Community Fairs, assessing fees and fines sooner, learning the industry by subscribing to industry trade publications, utilizing social networking to get the message out, and working with alarm companies on who their top offenders are.

## FARA's Remember the Alarm!



This year's game, similar to the game show Family Feud, proved to be just as competitive and exciting as the year before. **Rex Adams,** owner of American Security Devices in Richardson, Texas, once again hosted the game. Rex has also served as the President of National Electronic Security Alliance (NESA), which was a Platinum sponsor for the FARA Institute. Rex was hilarious as ever by sliding a joke or two in as each teams' competitive edge took over. Rex proved, once again, with his smiles and great sense of humor why everyone loves him and the games each year at the Symposium.

Everyone rallied around and broke up into four teams consisting of public safety, alarm industry, and vendors. The thinking hats were put on as each team chose a captain and debated on their strategy to attempt to answer as many questions as possible covering topics from false alarm reduction brochures, publications, and bulletins to get the highest score on the board by time the end of the game came to close.



After all of the gloves were off the battle began with team M&M coming out on top. Each member of the winning team received a FARA clock and bragging rights!

## What Can Alarm Companies Do For Me?



The most beneficial relationship an alarm coordinator can have is with alarm companies. Alarm companies can assist the alarm coordinator in many ways.

FARA Board Member, **David Wilson**, Charlotte –Mecklenburg moderated a panel consisting of:
- **Duane Cruz**, San Antonio Police Department
- **Kristen LaPiano**, Dallas Police Department
- **Kathleen Schraufnagel**, North Texas Alarm Association
- **Joe Carr**, United Central Control

Alarm companies can collaborate on new ordinances or updates on current ordinances. Alarm companies are first in line to know the newest and latest technology and can offer valuable input in this area. This in turn may help an ordinance keep up with rapidly changing technology.
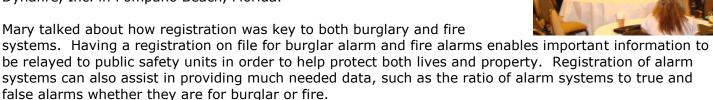
Alarm companies can also exchange information or work on solutions with troubled areas.  The benefit is a two way street.  Alarm companies improve as well when they are willing to work with alarm units.

How does one establish these relationships?  Visit your local alarm companies and get to know them. Attend a meeting hosted by regional and local associations or host a regional coordinator meeting and invite the industry.  If you are experiencing a roadblock with an alarm company, associations may be called upon for assistance.  To find out more about associations, visit **FARA's** website, www.faraonline.org.

Alarm companies are working well with public safety.  Do not hesitate to contact them and establish a working relationship.  Public safety, the alarm industry and the alarm user will all benefit.

## What Can We Learn From Each Other?

Are burglar alarm systems and fire alarm systems that much different?  How different are they really?  This very informative course was led by **Joe Carr** of United Central Control Inc, **Mike Mahoney** of Vector Security, Inc., and **Mary Galloway**, Customer Service & Key Account Representative, with Dynafire, Inc. in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Mary talked about how registration was key to both burglary and fire systems.  Having a registration on file for burglar alarm and fire alarms enables important information to be relayed to public safety units in order to help protect both lives and property.  Registration of alarm systems can also assist in providing much needed data, such as the ratio of alarm systems to true and false alarms whether they are for burglar or fire.

Education is knowledge and power, so the more knowledge an alarm user has on how the alarm system works the fewer false alarms they are likely to have.  Instructors urged us to start a False Alarm Awareness School to educate the users in our jurisdictions.

Maintenance is critical for both burglar and fire alarms systems.  However, it was interesting to learn that the #1 cause of false alarms in a fire alarm system is the equipment itself, whereas human interaction is the #1 cause of false alarms for burglar alarm systems.

Mary also stressed that having an Ordinance with tiered fines is very important.

Having covers on pull stations can reduce false fire alarms. Making sure equipment is UL certified can reduce both fire and burglar alarms.

After we learned about the equipment and differences between fire and burglar alarm systems, Mary asked of ways that attendees deal with excessive false alarms.  Attendees from all over weighed in and gave advice: from bringing the alarm user and alarm company into the police department for a meeting to holding alarm user awareness classes, site inspections, and so much more.  It was evident that we all have unique and interesting ideas and can learn a lot from each other.

Public safety works together all the time for vehicle accidents, fire incidents, medical emergencies, and natural disasters, so why not on false alarms, Mike asked.  Public and owner education are the key.

At the end of the presentation Mike asked, "What is the common thread?"  And the answer is education, education, and more education and Mary asked so "How Different Are We?"

## Everyone Needs a Checkup Sometime

Change is good - but how can one accomplish a change?  What can you do to make your superiors listen? **Kathy Rudover,** Windsor Police Service and **Greg Schmit,** Sioux Falls PD led the discussion on how one can give their daily tasks a tune up.

Change can be accomplished - but how?  Start by examining your alarm ordinance.  Does it meet the needs of your responding officers and alarm users?  Strengthening your alarm ordinance can be helpful.  There may be obstacles to getting the ordinance changed or enhanced.  Educate your command staff as knowledge is power.  Know how many alarm companies are in your jurisdiction and let your superiors know how many working relationships you have.

Alarm coordinators should also take the time to learn as well.  Take the time to know the people who respond to alarms.  Participate in a ride along with your patrol division.  Contact security companies who are first responders and learn their protocols.  This information may be invaluable.

What should you do with this information?  Educate, educate and educate.  Communication is key to success.  Educate the public about the alarm ordinance in your area.  Provide information to alarm users, alarm companies and other entities, such as real estate boards.

Contact alarm companies and work with them.  Not sure how to contact an alarm company?  Visit the National Electronic Security Alliance (NESA) website at www.nesaus.org.

Don't reinvent the wheel.  Tap into your resources such as FARA or your peers for assistance.  Remember to be diligent and tenacious.  Do not take no for an answer!

## How to Select Alarm Management Software

What does one begin to look for when selecting alarm software? **Norma Beaubien**, Director, Montgomery County Police Department provided the audience with plenty of information to ponder.

What type of software to use is a mission critical decision, because the level of functionality will determine things such as staffing.  The more automation you have, the less actual people will be needed to run your unit.  You have to understand what to look for and learn what questions to ask.  How many people are able to use the program at one time?  How many people will have access to information?  Will it grow with expansion?  A program must accommodate your needs and business rules or it may not provide you with the automation you need.

Should you go with a program that is already established (COTS-commercial off the shelf) or have one designed specific (custom) to your jurisdiction?  There are pro and cons to either choice.  The benefit to custom software is that it is specific to your needs. The program may be written by an outside vendor or in-house.  Your rules are used to develop the software program.  Sounds perfect, right?  This choice can be expensive and there is a greater up-front time investment.  You will get what you ask for and if one does not know what to ask for, you may be stuck with a program that does not meet your needs.

Choosing commercial software has some benefits.  You have a variety to select from and may even test drive and speak to current users.  The package is already written and can offer some user customization.  However, the program may not meet all of your specifications.  Necessary customization may be expensive and the software company owns the program code.

Another factor to consider is maintenance and support. What sort of warranty is offered if you choose to go COTS? Is it still valid if worked on in-house? What if your program needs to be enhanced? Will support for technology upgrades be included? Will the software company provide that service without a charge? Is there network maintenance included? What if your program becomes infested with a bug? How will that be handled? Will a book be provided or will support be available? Ask these "what if" questions and make sure to include the agreement in your contracts.

It is vital to prepare a detailed functional requirement documents (DFRD) that lists all of the functionality you want/need the software system to have. What is needed or wanted to administer your program? Assess proposals or existing software against your requirements. It is important to make sure that the chosen software can accommodate both current and future needs.

Security is another vital point that should be considered. The system should be able to handle confidential information. Firewall issues should not prevent or inhibit data transfer. Shared hardware, communication networks and operating systems need to be factored in as well.

Client server applications are more secure and the database is less exposed to attack. The application, however, is code specific on each machine and program modifications equals increased work. The information is also harder to share.

Data is another key point. How much data can your system handle and will it accommodate growth? Will it be able to clean data out? As an alarm program grows, so must its tools. The software should be able to accommodate an increased number of users. A system platform is our next consideration.

A system platform can be web-based. It may be accessible from anywhere and modification and enhancements may be made once. It also provides easier access for large number of users and for off-site users. Firewalls can cause a problem for web-based platforms. There are security concerns for servers with internet access.

Basic features for alarm program software should include the ability to permit and manage alarm users for both residential and businesses, process incident data and process billing data. It should be able to generate notices, manage payments, generate management data and provide system administration. Unique identification such as status of alarm user, residential vs. commercial, fees, fire or burglar alarm and a link to the alarm company should be included in the basic features of your system. It should be able to link to alarm users with unique identification, modify data and accommodate responsible parties. It should be able to capture relevant data from CAD and have a two-way electronic interface. The data from CAD should then be linked to alarm user and determine if the alarm is chargeable or not?

The system should also provide a notice and report generation. Notices should include false alarm notices, renewal notices and inspections. Reports should include alarm user lists and delinquent users with amounts due.

It is important and helpful for your system to be concurrent with billing processes and to link payments to a specific account. It should also create an audit trail. Credit card processing should also be accommodated.

Management reports should provide information on payment information, account adjustments, false alarm edits, user name and location edits, new users, and renewal users for both businesses and residential alarm users.

System administration has to keep up with global changes. Users may need to be added and passwords have to be administered. Permission and accessibility has to be managed and look-up tables have to be modified.

General characteristics for alarm programs should model the permit application being used. The characteristics should also maintain constant verbiage for click boxes. Make sure you can point and click and have pull down lists. Automatic error checking is always helpful.

Choosing commercial or in-house software can be politically sensitive.  A particular skill set is a must and this may cause a conflict for in-house service.  Generating an alarm program may not be at the top of your IT's priority list so you are at the mercy of their schedule.  You also want a quality work product.  Determine what you want, who you want to provide it and what it will cost in both funds and benefits.  Include your IT staff in your decision making process.  Make the argument and use your leverage.

Whew!!  So much information but do not fear.  FARA can help.  Take a look at the manuals on alarm management software and at the software vendor questionnaire.  Send out an assistance request to other FARA members and learn from your peers.  Ask questions, be diligent and be precise.

## The Alarm Users Always…!



Education, education, education!  That was the bottom line for this course on how to best deal with alarm users who oftentimes do not understand the scope of the false alarm problem.  Nor do they understand the very basics including the definition of a false alarm, why they have to obtain a permit to use their alarm system and why they receive bills for false alarms.

Moderated by **Stacey Peacock** of the Barnstable Police Department in Massachusetts, this course was chock-full of audience participation detailing specific things we can do as alarm coordinators to better inform/educate our customers.

Stacey reminded us to always document our actions in the alarm user's file so that down the road we know what happened and what we said or agreed to.  Working with the alarm companies and their customers was a common theme throughout the class, as was just giving the alarm users an opportunity to vent.  We learned that it is critical to have a documented appeal process and to communicate those requirements to alarm users.

We also learned that even if schools or government facilities are not covered under the mandates of our ordinance, that we should still offer training and open the lines of communication with these alarm users to identify and rectify problems.

## FARA Expo and Reception

In an effort to best utilize the shortened time frame of the FARA symposium, we combined the FARA Expo with our usual hospitality suite and held a reception featuring heavy hor'doeuvres and a cash bar during the Expo.

The FARA Board of Directors would like to extend a very special thank you to our FARA Expo participants:
- **ATB Services**
- **Crywolf/AOT Public Safety Corp.**
- **Digital Design Group, Inc.**
- **Elite CEU**
- **Texas Alarm Associations - Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, Houston Gulf Coast Alarm Association, North Texas Alarm Association, and the South Texas Alarm Association**.

All of the vendors were given an opportunity to speak to the entire group about their particular service and/or product during the opening session and to then expand on that during individual talks at the Expo.

All FARA committees also manned booths to talk with the membership about what their initiatives are and how members could assist in those efforts. We are happy to report that some FARA members did sign up to join most committees. We are grateful to those members for stepping up and helping to ensure the success of our association. We thank all of our vendors, who so generously provided information on their specific products or services, many of which are designed to reduce false alarms or assist in the management and billing of false alarms.

**Elite CEU**, FARA's partner in developing and hosting on-line training for the alarm industry, public safety and the alarm user, held a drawing and gave away a free lap top. Norma Beaubien, Montgomery County Police Department, was the very excited winner! While many tried to steal the lap top from her, and some were actually successful for a short period of time, we are happy to report that Norma did make it home with the computer.

## FARA Member of the Year Awards

Two very deserving FARA members received the Norma C. Beaubien Public Safety Member of the Year Award for 2010. The honors went to **Stacey Peacock**, Barnstable Police Department, Massachusetts and **Sue Clark**, Montgomery County Police Department, Maryland.

**Stacey Peacock**, Alarm Administrator for the Barnstable Police Department in Massachusetts was recognized for her immeasurable contributions to both FARA and the Barnstable community. She has been a contributing member of the Membership Committee for many years, serves as their scribe and helped to put FARA on the map in Facebook. She assisted in the creation and fine-tuning of the FARA mentoring program, which serves to get our new members acclimated to FARA and all we have to offer. Stacey has made countless phone calls to members on a variety of topics related to membership and mentoring. She is also a contributing member of the Communications Committee, writing and editing manuals, guides, brochures and bulletins. Most recently, she volunteered to become one of our Web Site Editors, in charge of coordinating the look, feel and content of our new web page. Stacey is a Certified Alarm Manager through FARA's Professional Certification Program. She has also done an excellent job of serving as a moderator and presenter at FARA symposium courses.

Stacey started a false alarm program in Barnstable, Massachusetts from the ground up. She worked tirelessly on modifying her ordinance to ensure it was effective for all parties. Through her efforts, she was successful in reducing false alarms in her community by more than 50%. She developed and maintains effective working relationships with citizens, command staff and alarm company representatives, which helped her achieve her outstanding reduction in false alarms. Stacey provides assistance and information about false alarm reduction issues to the legislature and other jurisdictions in Massachusetts. She was instrumental in researching and selecting new software to more efficiently and effectively manage their false alarm program. Finally, Stacey successfully thwarted an attempt by the local alarm association to enact statewide alarm legislation, which would have pre-empted local jurisdictions leaving them no voice in how to implement false alarm programs in their own communities.

Stacey is committed to her profession and is passionate about reducing false alarms. Her positive attitude and great work ethic also make her a great addition to the FARA team. Stacey is truly deserving of this award as she epitomizes the FARA mission. We are very fortunate to have her as a member of the FARA team.

**Sue Clark**, Program Specialist with the Montgomery County Police Department in Maryland was also honored for her incredible work for FARA and her police agency.



Sue serves as Chair of the Training and Certification Committee and did an outstanding job with a committee that has very few members. She recruited new members for the committee and selected and mentored a new chair for the Professional Certification Subcommittee. Sue worked tirelessly to get the regional training classes off the ground – personally making numerous phone calls to area public safety (fire and law enforcement) advising of the classes and seeking participation. She spearheaded successful Essentials Classes in San Antonio and in Maryland. She also co-authored the Train the Trainer course to get more qualified people to serve as instructors of the Essentials class. Sue promotes FARA membership and attendance in training venues at every opportunity. She served as the inaugural Secretary of the Mid-Atlantic (former Maryland) Chapter of FARA.

Sue may best be remembered as the individual who spearheaded the effort to get on-line alarm industry training implemented. She worked tirelessly, and mostly on her own time, to create the False Alarm Reduction 101 course for the alarm industry. There are six more classes to come in the 200 series and eight more in the 300 series. In fact, she is so committed to FARA and the on-line training that she has volunteered to come back from her lake-front home in Virginia to work on the upcoming 200 and 300 series courses.

Sue works closely with over 360 alarm companies that do business in Montgomery County to ensure they are properly licensed and comply with the provisions of the alarm law. She has built extensive working relationships with area alarm coordinators and their staff. She took on large corporate accounts to educate them on false alarm reduction and cut false alarms in half for one particular bank in Montgomery County.

Sue is truly a valued and exceptional member of FARA and is richly deserving of this award.

## FARA Associate Member of the Year Awards

The FARA Awards Committee also opted to recognize two different associate members for their outstanding contributions to FARA, their companies and the communities they serve. The W. Rex Bell FARA Associate Member of the Year Awards for 2010 went to **Kristina Walker** of Vector Security and **Stuart Forchheimer** of Homesafe Security.



**Kristina Walker** serves as the False Alarm Coordinator for the National Accounts Division of Vector Security, Inc. in Manassas, Virginia. She is a dedicated employee who gives 150% every day of the year towards false dispatch reduction. Kristina touts false alarm reduction and doing things the "right" way at every chance both with customers, as well as with management staff within her company. She works with customers to resolve false alarm issues and ensures that permits are current and valid. Kristina has lent great assistance in reducing false dispatch rates by 52% for the National Accounts Division. She also developed excellent working relationships with numerous local jurisdictions. On two separate occasions, she invited local alarm coordinators to the national accounts division of Vector and provided public safety with a forum to talk about why false alarms are such a big problem for law enforcement and what the employees of Vector can do to further reduce false alarms.

Kristina is Co-Chair of the FARA Membership Committee. She was instrumental in getting FARA its own Facebook page and helping to move FARA into the 21st century. She helped to define the FARA mentoring program and serves as a mentor to many FARA members. She has developed excellent and innovative ways to grow the membership and talks about FARA at every opportunity. Her enthusiasm to increase membership in FARA is infectious and her work on the Membership Committee is valuable and very much appreciated.

Kristina was instrumental in helping get FARA's Fire Committee off the ground last year and serves as a mentor to its co-chair, Mike Mahoney.  She is a member of the regional Mid-Atlantic Chapter of FARA and attends meetings giving an alarm industry perspective during discussions.  She truly embraces the mission of FARA and all law enforcement personnel she works with on a daily basis.  Her upbeat spirit and enthusiasm makes people want to work with her for the betterment of the entire industry.

For all the above reasons and more, Kristina Walker was the perfect candidate to receive the W. Rex Bell Associate Member of the Year Award.

**Stuart Forchheimer,** President of Homesafe Security in Baltimore, Maryland was also honored for his exceptional contributions to FARA, his company and the community he serves.  Stu owns a local alarm company and never draws attention to himself but is always there for FARA, his customers and his employees.  One of the nominations the FARA Awards Committee received stated, "If all alarm companies were as dedicated, ethical and professional as Stuart's, we would all be looking for another line of work."  His company has consistently low false dispatch rates in the Baltimore Washington Metropolitan region.



Stu developed working relationships with all surrounding jurisdictions to improve the reliability of alarm systems, reduce false dispatches and to protect citizens from deceptive trade practices.  He worked tirelessly with regulators in Maryland to develop brochures and flyers to alert consumers to problems associated with the "summer sales" business model.  He co-hosted FARA's webinar on Summer Sales Scams and spent countless hours working with FARA to ensure the webinar was a success.  Under Stuart's direction, Homesafe Security repaired, at their cost, the damage caused to his customer's property when they were taken advantage of by unethical sales representatives in summer sales campaigns.

Stu is one of only two alarm industry representatives certified to teach FARA's Essentials of False Alarm Reduction course.  In order to become certified, Stu had to take time out of his busy schedule to study the course and then attend a day long training session on what FARA expects of its instructors.  At that training, he was required to show that he understood the content, was well versed in both the alarm industry and public safety sides of the equation, and then, while being filmed, had to give a portion of the class to other trainees and FARA instructors.  Stu did all this on his own, taking valuable time away from running his business to help FARA be able to provide the Essentials class in additional venues.  Stu then co-taught at the Maryland class last fall.

Stu serves as the Treasurer of the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association.  He is one of the strongest voices on their Board championing FARA, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of FARA and false alarm reduction.  He donated funds to the FARA Institute to help get public safety to training symposiums and was instrumental in securing donations from the Maryland Burglar & Fire Alarm Association as well.

Stu is a truly exceptional individual, who richly deserves the W. Rex Bell Associate Member of the Year Award and FARA was very proud to honor him as such.

## False Alarm Reduction Association Achievement Awards

FARA created the False Alarm Reduction Association Achievement Awards to recognize public safety and alarm industry professionals who either have a false alarm reduction program that has shown meaningful or significant reductions over a three to five year period or that has shown a significant or meaningful contribution towards the FARA mission.  The attendees at the training symposium received all nominations and then selected the nominees they believed were most deserving.  Attendees had an excellent array of nominees from which to choose this year, and three awards were bestowed.

## Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Achievement Award

The public safety award went to the **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department**, in Charlotte, North Carolina.  The department went from a high of 106,061 alarm responses in 1995 to a low of 60,105 in 2010 even while increasing the number of registered alarm users to 185,000.  In 1995, alarm calls constituted 20% of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's total calls for service, and today that number is only 3.7% - an astounding decrease.  Charlotte-Mecklenburg has achieved this success through the dedication of its False Alarm Unit staff, excellent alarm ordinance, which includes a no response policy for failure to obtain an alarm user permit or failure to pay assessed fines, and through the relationship building they have accomplished with the alarm industry in Charlotte.  They outsource the management of their program to a third-party vendor, but maintain Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department staff to handle things like appeals and alarm user interventions for problem accounts.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department is to be commended for their incredible and sustained false alarm reduction efforts over the past 15 years.

## Alarm Industry False Alarm Reduction Achievement Award



The alarm industry award went to **Monitronics, Inc.** in Dallas, Texas.  Monitronics has been successful in reducing false alarms from their monitored accounts throughout the entire United States.  They created a False Alarm Control Team, whose sole job is to reduce false alarms.  They instituted Enhanced Call Verification on ALL of their accounts, track and study false alarm rates for jurisdictions in which they have customers, make personal calls to high offenders (3 or more alarms in a 24-hour period or 5 dispatches in a month), and provide extensive employee training on how to address false alarms.  These efforts filter through their entire company; i.e., central station, tech support, customer service, retention, dealers and dealer support.

Monitronics creates a Top 9 Jurisdiction Report, which lists the top 20 customers in the 9 jurisdictions that have the most dispatches.  Utilizing that report, they are able to perform personal outreach to determine the cause of the problem and then offer solutions.  Monitronics has also done an excellent job of building relationships with public safety agencies.  They do email, bulk mailings, phone calls and site visits.  They also attend monthly false alarm prevention hearings in Dallas.

The results of their efforts are impressive.  In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, they increased their number of customers yet reduced the number of alarms dispatched and went from a .249 dispatch rate in 2009 to .226 in 2010.  Baltimore County, Maryland's numbers are even better with a dispatch rate of .328 in 2009 to .264 in 2010.  Multnomah County, Oregon showed more alarm users in 2010 yet a reduction in the dispatch rate from .240 in 2009 to .220 in 2010.  Monitronics has clearly had a positive impact on reducing false alarms from their customers and are to be commended for those efforts.



## FARA Achievement Award

The FARA Achievement Award is given to the person, agency, company or association that has shown significant or meaningful contributions toward the FARA mission.

The attendees at the symposium selected **Joe Carr**, United Central Control for this honor, one he truly deserves.  Joe served as liaison with the Texas industry associations for the San Antonio Symposium.  He became a member of the Conference Committee and participated on teleconferences and shared his extensive knowledge of the area, the alarm industry and possible instructors.  He coordinated the scavenger hunt and extensively promoted Texas Day to get the greatest participation at FARA's San Antonio training symposium by public safety and the alarm industry throughout Texas.  He taught classes and found speakers and panelists for several sessions.

Joe attended the Regional Training Session in Dallas and attended and promoted the FARA classes at the TBFAA Dallas and San Antonio Conventions. Joe was our "go to" guy on the ground in San Antonio, and we would never have been able to put on such a successful symposium without him.

Joe definitely deserved to win this award as he epitomizes the description of this award by providing significant or meaningful contributions towards the FARA mission through his cooperative efforts and championing of FARA at all levels.

## General Membership Meeting



The annual FARA General Membership Meeting was held on Thursday, April 7, 2011. President Miller thanked the membership for their support of her presidency and stated she was honored to be the first Canadian president of FARA. She announced the new web site project that is coming to fruition, talked about the various assistance requests FARA put out to assist members, and thanked all of our FARA Institute sponsors, who made it possible for many public safety members to attend the San Antonio symposium.

Executive Director Brad Shipp reported on the financial condition of the association. The membership agreed that members of FARA's Mid-Atlantic Chapter should conduct the next audit of FARA's books.

All of FARA's committees; i.e., Awards, Communications, Conference, Fire, Membership, Training and Certification and the Professional Certification subcommittee, provided reports on their accomplishments in 2010 and where they want to go in 2011. All made pleas for the general membership to consider joining one of our very worthwhile committees.

Elections were held for FARA Director and Officer positions. Results were as follows:

- Vice President-Electronic Security – **Deborah Hansen**, Naperville Police Department, Naperville, Illinois
- Secretary – **Pam Steiger**, Louisville Metro Police Department, Louisville, Kentucky
- At-Large Director – **David Wilson**, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, Charlotte, North Carolina
- At-Large Director – **Stacey Peacock**, Barnstable Police Department, Barnstable, Massachusetts
- Associate Director-Electronic Security – **Pat Killian**, Vector Security, Richmond, Virginia

Per FARA Bylaws, President Miller appointed the following:

1. Board Seat - Associate Director-Fire – **Mary Galloway**, Dynafire, Casselberry, Florida, who is replacing **Kathleen Schraufnagel**
2. Committee Co-Chairs – Conference Committee, **Tammy Foxworthy**, City of Olathe, Olathe, Kansas and **Kathy Rudover**, Windsor Police Service, Windsor, Ontario who are replacing **Norma Beaubien** and **Kathleen Schraufnagel**
3. Committee Chair – Training and Certification Committee – **Kerri McDonald**, Riverside Police Department, Riverside, California, who is replacing **Sue Clark**

## Board of Directors Meeting

The Board of Directors held their annual face-to-face meeting on Friday, April 7, 2011. The Board discussed the San Antonio symposium at length. Completed evaluation forms were reviewed and discussed. We received excellent reviews and got many suggestions for possible classes for Albuquerque in 2012. The Board also discussed possible formats for classes, what works best and what doesn't, as well as possible changes in the starting time for the symposium and how to recognize our vendors in a different way. Executive Director Brad Shipp provided a demo of the new web site, including functionality, screen navigation and current content. While the web site is still a work in progress, it was the first time the Board got a chance to "look and feel" the product. The Board also discussed creation of a new Web Site Committee to handle issues.

Five bylaw amendments were discussed and will be presented to the membership in Albuquerque. Discussion was also held on FARA's Facebook page, IQ becoming an additional sponsor for the PDQ Award, changing the day of the Board meetings and adding additional signers on the FARA bank account.

## Fundraising Efforts

Several different fundraisers were held this year, including our annual Silent Auction, which raised a whopping $1072 for the association. Special FARA raffles were held for a $100 jewelry gift certificate and a beautiful print of the San Antonio Riverwalk. Along with our 50/50 raffle and the sale of FARA padfolios and bags, the total collected was $1503. Thanks to all who participated!

## Scavenger Hunt

Several teams discovered San Antonio's Riverwalk Area and had fun solving the clues, but only one team prevailed to win the hunt.



## Training Symposium Presentations On-Line

All PowerPoint presentations that were given at the San Antonio training symposium have been posted in the Member's Only portion of the web site. You will need your login and password to access this portion of the site. If you need assistance accessing the Member's Only section, please contact Brad Shipp at bradshipp@4yoursolution.com.

## Please Share Your Newsletters and Tips with Us

We would like to see how you communicate with your alarm users. Please add FARA to your mailing list if you send out Newsletters or mailings with false alarm reduction information. Do you have a brochure that describes your ordinance or program? We would like to see it. Staff will review what we receive and share tips and information with your fellow members in later issues of this newsletter.

Please send your newsletters, tips and brochures to:
False Alarm Reduction Association
10024 Vanderbilt Circle, Unit 4
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## FARA Mission Statement

It is the mission of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) to provide a forum for local government alarm ordinance professionals to exchange information on successful false alarm reduction programs, to serve as a clearinghouse for agencies seeking to reduce false alarms, and to foster an environment of cooperation among public safety, the alarm industry and the alarm users.

## Contact Us

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Comments and suggestions regarding FARA's InfoLink are both encouraged and welcomed. If you would like to submit an article for publication, or if you have any questions or concerns about this newsletter, please contact the FARA Board of Directors at 301/519-9237, or by e-mail at: info@faraonline.org

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