

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH & SCHOOL

In the wild west of Montana lies the small city of Havre, surrounded by towering mountains and rolling plains. The rural community is home to St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church, a landmark of the area since the late 19th century. St. Jude's had its quaint beginning in 1898 as a church, before a natural disaster in 1898 destroyed the property, resulting in reconstruction in 1900. The current building stands in a central location in Havre, after the facility was moved in 1914 and rebuilt again in 1924.

It was during this time, in 1916, that St. Jude's opened St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic School with a small enrollment of 100 students. The school has now started its 105th year with more than 150 students ranging from pre-school to eighth grade and offers extended care before and after hours. With more than 300 families regularly welcomed to church services at St. Jude's, making sure everyone on campus is safe and the property protected has been a high priority.



Challenges

With the recent trends in active shooter violence over the past few decades, schools and churches across the United States have turned to increased security measures to ensure the safety of their people. St. Jude's was no different, realizing their outdated surveillance system wasn't providing the level of security required.

"We had a cheap system to just get us by. You could spend an entire day reviewing footage," explained Father Dan Wathen, pastor of the church. "We needed a birds-eye view of the good, the bad and the ugly, as well as to be able to narrow down the footage to smaller windows of time."

There had already been incidents on the property of arson and theft, but it came to a head when children playing with candles in the church started a fire, filling the building with smoke. While no one was harmed, the incident pushed St. Jude's to look into alternate options for their security system. With a total of four buildings encompassing two entire city blocks, including connection tunnels between them, someone could enter one building and end up in another without notice. St. Jude's needed to know who was going in and out of the buildings to provide a secure environment for both their community and for a local dance studio who rents space from the school.

Solution

St. Jude's was working with facility services and security systems integrator FICO on their HVAC systems, who offered to introduce them to Salient Systems. FICO knew Salient's CompleteView Video Management System (VMS) had the ability to secure the church and school without drastic system changes.

"Salient has always had a 'blinking light' when it comes to video management software. When a company focuses on one product like that, it becomes the best in the industry." said Gary Marrone, manager of security for FICO. "It's their initiative to provide the best VMS solution in the market, so I knew they were the right choice for St. Jude's."

By working with Salient Systems, St. Jude's can now network between buildings on their property and their internal communication has drastically improved. CompleteView was able to easily integrate with the existing camera infrastructure at the property, which included 18 interior and 11 exterior Vivotek cameras that constantly monitor all activity on the campus. Demonstrating the value almost immediately, the cameras picked up a bike theft at the school and, using CompleteView, St. Jude's was able to efficiently narrow down the surveillance window and provide clear footage to the police department, resulting in the perpetrators being found.

Many churches maintain an open-door policy, which means that the facilities function essentially as community public property. In close proximity to a city park, St. Jude's is no different — unknown people are occasionally loitering on the campus, presenting possible security risks. During one instance, a teacher did not recognize a couple that had appeared and was concerned for the safety of the students. The cameras — a mix of 5MP varifocal zoom cameras and 180-degree 5MP fisheyes on the exterior, and 2 MP domes — were able to follow the two to ensure no crime was being committed while the footage was being used to identify them. Another benefit to the system is if there are any disciplinary issues on the playground, the school staff can review the video and act accordingly.



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"It was a dream come true for us," said Kathryn Tilleman, development director at St. Jude's school. "We have a greater ability to keep the church and school more open and secure. The footage is very clear and easy to find and access. The CompleteView interface makes the security system extremely user-friendly for us all."

Administrators at the school are able to segment user access to the surveillance system for individual staff members, including assigning different staffers the ability to access specific cameras. This ensures those working during extended care hours at the school also have use of the system for added security when other system administrators are not on the property.

St. Jude's administrators can also use CompleteView's mobile access for remote footage viewing and system management, as well as graphical mapping features to identify the specific locations of camera events more quickly. The ability to search through video using GeoView layouts has also increased the speed and efficiency for playback and searching footage. With the Video Wall feature, administrators can view and manage multiple monitor arrays to see updates in real-time.

“Working together with FICO, we were pleased to be able to offer St. Jude’s an intuitive surveillance system that enables school and church staff to easily notice unusual events or behavior,” said Jerry Smith, Director of Sales, Western US for Salient Systems. “CompleteView can easily accommodate system expansions as St. Jude’s needs grow and change while still providing a user-friendly interface for staff members.”

Future

With an additional camera for the gym interior and additional exterior cameras in the works, St. Jude’s Catholic Church and School has seen tremendous growth in their security since integrating CompleteView. Though the cameras are hidden from view, students are aware of them, so playground behavior has been rapidly improving. In general, church members, students and staff have felt an increased level of safety on premise, achieving St. Jude’s goal of creating a secure space for their people.