

Criminal tracking system online in county

Wednesday, May 16, 2007 4:55 PM CDT

A program designed to keep Oklahoma crime victims safer is now in place in more than half of Oklahoma's 77 counties, including in Sequoyah County.

Attorney General Drew Edmondson said recently that VINE, which stands for Victim Information and Notification Everyday, is being implemented by Edmondson's Victims Services Unit. The criminal tracking system allows Oklahomans to register to be notified about changes in status for Oklahoma inmates.

Garvin County officially came on line Wednesday night, making it the 39th county to do so since the program's inception in September 2006.

"This system allows crime victims to be proactive when it comes to their own safety," Edmondson said. "It allows for the peace of mind that comes with knowing exactly where an offender is within our penal system, and of knowing that should that person be released or escapes, his victims will be alerted and can take precautions."

To date, almost 600 Oklahomans have signed up to receive notifications through the VINE system.

VINE is currently being funded by a \$1.2 million federal grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The grant will fund the system through the program's two-year implementation plan, when it will be up to the legislature to provide money for its continued availability, according to a press release from Edmondson's office.

"Once it is in place, it will take about \$450,000 per year to keep VINE going," Edmondson said. "I hope the legislature will take the opportunity to invest in our crime victims' safety."

Edmondson said county sheriffs are to be commended for their work to bring VINE into the counties that are VINE-ready.

"This system only works if local law enforcement commits to making it work, and the leadership these county sheriffs have shown will make criminal tracking a reality in Oklahoma," Edmondson said.

Edmondson said he hopes to have all 77 counties online by May 2008.

For more information or to register for OK VINE, call 1 (877) OK4-VINE or log on to www.vinelink.com.