

Name tags go high-tech in Gambrills



Visitor name tag from School of the Incarnation, Gambrills.

Last week, while spending some time at School of the Incarnation in Gambrills for a heart-warming story on homeless outreach, I was amazed by the Anne Arundel County school's snazzy system for admitting visitors.

As soon as I was buzzed in, I was asked to present my driver's license - which a receptionist electronically swiped and used to print out a name tag with an image from my license, along with the date and time I checked in and the purpose of my visit.

What I didn't know, but was later told by Lisa Shipley, principal, was that each time the driver's licenses of visitors are swiped, a computerized system instantly checks the sex offenders registry to see if any names match. Using a software program called "Raptor," the system instantaneously notifies the school of potential problems.

"Parents are very happy with it," Shipley said. "It's an extra measure of security."

Should the system identify a sexual offender, an alert is sent to Shipley's cell phone and other responders. School officials immediately notify the police. The system also has a customizable feature so that if a certain parent does not have custody of his or her child, the school will know if that person is attempting to pick up that student.

Incarnation began using Raptor this year. The software costs between \$400-\$500 annually, plus expenses for the label printer and labels. In addition to driver's licenses, it can scan passports and other government identity cards.

Shipley noted that the school has not had any problems with someone coming on campus who should not be there. The system cross checks birth dates and addresses so that those with common names are not misidentified. Photos of sex offenders with

the same name as a visitor are shown on the school's computer screen as another visual aid for confirming a person's identity. Once a parent or other adult is scanned in the system, he or she does not have to provide the license again since the information is kept on file to be re-scanned with a bar code.

"Our staff uses it to sign in and out," Shipley said. "It's nice because we can see who is in our building at any time - staff or visitors."

Sounds like a pretty good system to me.