

Police Grant Geared Toward Emergencies

### **Niles Journal (Journal and Topics)**

**December 15, 2004**

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-9th) visited Niles on Monday with \$150,000 in grant money for the Police Department.

During a press conference at the Niles police station Monday Schakowsky, standing alongside Mayor Nicholas Blase and Police Chief Dean Strzelecki, said the funds would be used to improve emergency communications.

"I am very pleased to have secured these critical funds for the Village of Niles to help improve the safety of our law enforcement and our residents," Schakowsky said. "Law enforcement officials must have the best equipment and latest technology available in order to communicate with each other and the residents they are entrusted to protect during an emergency."

About \$50,000 of the grant will fund an Emergency Operating Center (EOC) in the police station. According to Strzelecki, police and fire officials would join Niles department heads in this operating center in the event of a natural or man made disaster.

Assistant Village Manager Steve Vinezeano, who helped secure the funding, said the EOC came as a result of federal authorities inability to communicate on Sept. 11, 2001. Blase and others in village government wanted to ensure this did not happen in Niles in case of a calamity.

The remaining grant money, about \$100,000, will pay for an emergency display board to sit along Milwaukee Avenue. Strzelecki compared it to message boards seen along Illinois highways, though he said Niles' board would be more pleasing to the eye.

"We're a main thoroughfare out of Chicago to the Northwest suburbs and we're also the entrance to Chicago," Strzelecki explained. The message board will then serve as a notification for travelers in case of emergency, or to simply keep residents and commuters informed of community events, he said.

Although a site for the board has not yet been determined, Strzelecki speculated it may sit just north of the police station on Milwaukee Avenue. An installation date has not been established. Strzelecki indicated, however, that the board will go up in 2005.

Niles officials including Blase and Strzelecki lauded Schakowsky's efforts for securing the funds. "Congresswoman Schakowsky has always been concerned for the residents in her district and she has shown that with this grant," Blase commented.

Schakowsky helped set aside federal dollars for communities throughout the 9th District.

Funding for Niles came about following a request from Blase to Niles department heads and staffers to explore projects that could be funded through grant money. The only request granted by the fed was the money for law enforcement.

Vinezeano said the village will not have to pay for installation of the EOC or message board, that will come at the expense of the federal government. Niles will be responsible for upkeep of its new tools for law enforcement.