

In a Down Economy, Euclid Employer Continues to Grow

By Don Calderwood

Security alarm systems. An alarm goes off in a business or a residence. It's a holdup, a break-in, a fire or smoke alarm, an assault or another type of emergency situation. So a siren at the location may sound, bells or whistles ring and shriek through the air, but there is an alarm signal and the alarm signal goes...where? Where?

You may be surprised to learn that for decades hundreds of thousands of alarm signals from all over North America have come right here to Euclid, Ohio, to a national security monitoring company. Signals race to Euclid at lightning speed from telecommunications via telephone, cellular, and radio. With specialized alarm receivers and computers, security operators verify alarms and take action. The police or fire departments in the right locale are immediately notified to respond to the location. The whole process can be very fast. From the receipt of the signal to taking action is measured in seconds, not minutes. Behind the scenes this is all happening in Euclid. How did this get started here?

Twenty-two years ago Euclid residents Jim and Carrie Osborne, along with Bob and JoAnn Ambros, started a nationwide security alarm monitoring company here in Euclid that they called the Emergency Response Center. It wasn't nationwide when they started, and back then it was very small, a side business to providing other security services. Having only a handful of alarm accounts they didn't know at the time exactly what it would become. Over the next 17 years they went from 2 part-time employees to over 120 full-time employees with 3 shifts running 365 days a year. It grew slowly at first, but then as time went by they grew to monitoring more than 120,000 businesses and residences throughout the US and Canada. In 1997 the company was sold to a large, publicly held corporation that later moved it to Chicago. This left 100+ employees without jobs and took jobs from Euclid. But the story didn't end there.

In November 2001, Jim and Carrie Osborne opened American Response Center. Where? Right here in Euclid. They opened, hired some of their previous experienced employees, and they are now build-



The lifeblood of ARC's Central Station - DIAnna (foreground), Angie (back left), Vicky (standing) and Tracey (back right). Together they have 56 years of experience.

ing a nationwide security alarm monitoring company all over again. Starting from scratch they are now up to 15 employees at this time and expect to have over 50 full-time employees by the end of next year. Recently they passed inspection from Underwriters Laboratories and are designated as a U.L. Listed Central Station, a very important certification in the industry.

"We don't expect to ever grow to the size of our old company," says Jim Osborne, "but it's really hard to say. Look what happened last time! Seriously, though, it's our clear intention to build a solid company that gives everyone a good wage and stable employment opportunities. Our partners are friends and family - we are building ARC for long-term benefits to everyone, not a quick sale to an out-of-state corporation."

The Osborne's point to several key elements that have fueled their success and growth in their new venture with American Response Center. Their decades of previous experience have gone into ARC right from the start, so they have been able to build the company "right" from the ground up. Many alarm dealers that provide alarms to homes and businesses heard that the Osborne's were back in the monitoring business, and switched to ARC for monitoring. The Osborne's also practice the art of keeping everything simple: procedures,

computer displays, and instructions. Everything is clear, easy to read, and to understand - very important considering that their business is constantly dealing effectively with many emergencies. And though they could be considered by to be a "start up operation", their employees are some of the most experienced in the entire industry. The average number of years of experience as a security operator is 10 years, compared to some big centrals that average three. Employees of the former central station also returned to work with the Osborne's.

"The way that we monitor and respond to people in an emergency helps set us apart from some other monitoring companies," says Carrie Osborne, "because a person in an emergency or who's scared wants to hear a calm, friendly voice - someone who knows exactly what to do. They don't care about our computers."

As for why they chose Euclid again, Carrie Osborne stated, "We always had good luck in attracting strong applicants in this area, and our employees feel comfortable here. In addition to our living here in Euclid, more than one-third of our employees also live here. Euclid is located well for our employees and potential employees, ranging from Cleveland to Lake County."

"Since we operate around the clock, this is very important," Jim added. "Because we also monitor alarms in the city of Euclid, we do have daily contact with Euclid emergency services. They respond quickly for our subscribers and we feel very comfortable that they will always be there when they're needed. We feel that emergency services in Euclid are excellent, and that's important to all of us."

Note: ARC does not sell, install, or service alarm systems. To locate an Authorized ARC Security System Dealer or to read Security Tips, information can be found on their web site at www.american-response.com at "Consumers".