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WHEELS OF JUSTICE

Suspects' photos to scroll on truck

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By Brendan McCarthy

The latest tool set to snare criminals on the lam comes in the form of a tricked-out, lime-green truck. Instead of prowling streets with signs that extol "Your Ad Here," the high-tech rolling vehicle will feature mug shots of the New Orleans area's most wanted. The moving video billboard, unveiled at a news conference Thursday, is Crimestoppers' foray into street marketing for criminals.

The Metairie-based nonprofit group regularly purchases ad space on roadside billboards, using the high-profile real estate to publicize the names and booking mugs of dangerous fugitives.

This time, the advertisements will be on the move, reaching out to even more people, said Darlene Cusanza, the group's director.

The video billboard, a 46-inch LCD flat screen television built into the side of rehabbed ambulance, will continuously broadcast pictures of wanted criminals and other crime data for two months, free of charge, said the truck's owner Bill Hall, a Belle Chasse entrepreneur and owner of Tower Leasing Corp.

Hall cooked up the idea with Jefferson Parish Sheriff Harry Lee. The pair then brought the concept to Crimestoppers, which seized upon it.

"At night it is very impactful," Hall said. "You really can't miss it."

The truck will travel on busy roadways and stop at malls and loaded parking lots across the area, Hall said. After that, the traveling billboard will go back to its more traditional fare, promoting television shows, businesses and anyone whose willing to pay for the ad space.

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Crimestoppers can be reached at (504) 822-1111 or toll free at (877) 903-7867. Callers do not have to give their names or testify and can earn up to \$2,500 for tips that lead to an indictment.

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