

2011 Investigators of the Year

In June 2009, this year's investigator of the year received information from a reliable informant about the staged theft of a 2005 Activator, a race boat that had been stolen from a strip mall, given a new HIN, and resold as a 2008 Activator to an unsuspecting individual who put it on the race circuit. After an investigation that lasted several months, the investigators located the race boat in another state and it was recovered.

End of story? Hardly; it was just the beginning.

There are two things that IAMI's Investigators of the Year often have had in common. The first is an unwillingness of the investigators to rest on their laurels; the recovery of a single stolen boat is often only the beginning of what turns out to be a much larger investigation. In other words, the investigators were tenacious. The second thing that a lot of IAMI investigations have in common goes right to one of the reasons we all belong to IAMI: the use of other IAMI contacts-both law enforcement and non law enforcement- to expand and resolve their investigations. In other words, the investigators were smart.

Getting back to our story, the recovery of the Activator led to the arrest of five people, but investigators suspected the initial case was linked to the theft of another large race boat halfway across the country. An IAMI member in a nearby state was contacted, which eventually led to the arrest of seven more people. That still wasn't the end of the story, however. As various members of the theft ring were arrested, additional thefts came to light and more accomplices were arrested and stolen property recovered. The investigation went on for many months and led the investigators to several states. By the time the case was closed, 16 suspects had been arrested and numerous stolen racing boats, engines, outdrives, and equipment had been recovered. Some of the individuals arrested had been prominent names in the world of Offshore Racing. Not anymore.

One of this year's winners who has been investigating stolen boat cases for decades, said it was the best example he's seen of law enforcement and non law enforcement working together to solve a case.

This year's Investigators of the Year are:

Detective Donal Hughes, Suffolk County Police Department - New York

Detective Robert Petro, Suffolk County Police Department - New York

Charles Meacham, ICL Investigations, Inc. - Jacksonville, Florida

Todd Schwede, Todd & Associates, Inc. – San Diego, California