

# School principal's cell phone becomes vital safety tool

By MARY BROWNFIELD

**I**F CARMEL River School principal Jay Marden needs to get in touch with people quickly and quietly — if, for instance, an intruder is on campus — he can do it with the push of one button on his cell phone. The co-creator of the PUSH 5 system and father of two River kids, Ken Tam, donated the service to the school and has extended the offer to other campuses in the district.

Tam and friend Alan Larson founded their Carmel company, Boma Systems, Inc., and developed PUSH 5 last year. For \$24 annually, a customer signs up online, enters the information of the 12 people he would want to contact during an emergency, and programs his cell phone's No. 5 key to instantly dial the PUSH 5 alert number. When keyed, PUSH 5 silently activates an urgent alert and notifies everyone at once on home, work and cell phones, as well as via email and text messages. It can broadcast a voice message containing critical information about the emergency or initiate a conference call.

They designed the system to be "frictionless" — requiring no additional gadgets, special software or time-consuming downloads. "What's pervasive that everybody has?

Everybody has a cell phone," Tam pointed out, adding that any phone served by any carrier can be used. "If you make it affordable so it's a no-brainer, they'll do it."

The PUSH 5 options enable Marden to input more contacts and divide them into groups. Tam told The Pine Cone a Modesto school used it after police informed administrators a wanted parolee was in the vicinity, and the principal reported it "proved invaluable in the school's first-ever lockdown."

"Ken Daniel will tell you it's the most cost-effective thing he's ever done," he said.

### More confidence

In reaction to the Columbine, Colo., school shooting, legislators passed laws requiring campuses to develop hostile intruder alert systems, according to Tam, who said Marden was eager to try PUSH 5.

"Being able to contact them on the phone, you could talk to all the people and let them know what's going on, and the intruder can't hear what you're doing," Tam said.

Marden said he has registered three groups to receive alerts: the entire staff, just teachers, and yard duty supervisors.

"Obviously in a true emergency, I would want to engage in a conference call, and then

I have the ability to reach as many people as I've registered and talk to them either live or, if it's a less urgent situation, I could record a voicemail message," Marden said. He could register all the River parents and reach them in a moment, if needed.

During a conference call, he can designate which people can respond, "because obviously not everyone fares well in an emergency, and I don't want the line tied up with 50 voices or someone who's hysterical," Marden said.

PUSH 5 was installed a year ago at the school where Tam and his wife, Barbara, have a son, fifth-grader Nathaniel, and a daughter, third-grader Tatjana.

It's tested well but fortunately has yet to be used during an emergency, said Marden, who has plans to put it to greater use by designating more groups and teaching his staff how to take better advantage of it.

"Obviously we're a school that may not need it as much as schools that are in more difficult areas, and I would hope they would consider using the system in the future," Marden said. "This instills much greater confidence in the front office and our ability to communicate in case of emergency."

### What is Boma?

Tam was born in Hong Kong but moved to Menlo Park with his family at the age of 7. He went to work in the high-tech industry after spending two years in Africa with the Peace Corps in the mid-1980s, obtaining his master's in business administration and working for a company in Germany, where he met his wife.

Last year, he and Larson launched Boma Systems, Inc., named for the African barriers built of branches that sprout in the rain and grow to protect people from wild predators. According to Larson and Tam, they selected the name because, "protecting women and children from predators has always been our most important mission."

At a Carmel party thrown by resident Kelly Wheeler, the duo raised enough money to get their company off the ground. At the

time, the only service they offered was PUSH 5, which they operate in cooperation with first responders, organizations and law enforcement agencies "to provide peace of mind and protection."

They also started Win Back the Neighborhood, a campaign to get PUSH 5 to people in need. According to the plan, corporate sponsors contribute to neighborhood charities or foundations, which in turn purchase PUSH 5 at a discount from Boma and then distribute the subscriptions through local groups and officials.

"It's using Push 5 as the ultimate Neighborhood Watch vehicle," said Tam, who believes the program will help neighbors, community leaders and law enforcement fight crime and promote safety.

PUSH 5 also inspired other services. "Over time, as we presented the idea of PUSH 5 to potential investors and customers, they kept telling us they wanted to use PUSH 5 for other purposes, which then led us to develop the sister services BomaIC and BomaICpro," Tam said. Subscribers can broadcast a message or initiate a conference call to their contacts, and Tam said it's perfect for summoning help during a crisis, making an announcement or notifying people of a last-minute changes in plans.

"We've been really fortunate and have come up with something we think would help everyone," he said. "This thing has never been about to make a gazillion dollars. We want a good investment for our investors but for any organization, we will make it work in your budget."

Visit [www.bomasystems.com](http://www.bomasystems.com).

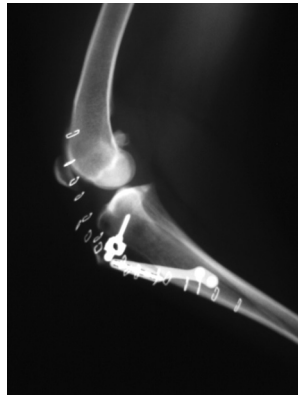
**One press of a phone's No. 5 key sends critical information quickly**

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By Shannon Hudzik, VMD



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In a case of ACL rupture, the knee joint must be surgically stabilized to avoid severe degenerative arthritis. Luckily there are a number of surgical options available in this advanced age of veterinary medicine. My procedure of choice for medium to large dogs is a dynamic stabilization termed the Tibial Tuberosity Advancement (TTA). Carmel Holistic Veterinary Clinic was actually the first hospital in the state of California to perform the surgery, though many specialty clinics and university hospitals throughout the rest of the nation and the world had already been successfully performing the TTA. Some of the many benefits of this procedure include a quicker recovery, very low rates of implant failure (the titanium implants are very strong and unlikely to trigger tissue reaction), and it costs about \$1000 less than a TPLO (the other main procedure for medium to large dogs). Please call if you want to learn more about the TTA or think your dog may have a torn ACL.

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