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### **Residents Gain Peace of Mind with New Access Control System**

Lake St. Clair is a beautiful gated community in Apollo Beach, Florida. It has 176 homes, many of them overlooking the 53-acre lake, where residents enjoy sailing and fishing.

The community is known for its quiet, peaceful atmosphere and convenience to the nearby cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Bradenton. But in 2009-2010 Lake St. Clair began experiencing a worrisome problem. Its homeowners had become the victims of a rash of burglaries to their cars and homes, 16 burglaries to be exact, and the frequency was increasing.

The members of Lake St. Clair's Homeowner's Association (HOA) met to discuss the situation. "We realized we had a false sense of security because our community was gated," explained Jim Knott, president of the association. "It was apparent that the burglars were not being deterred by our closed gate." Homeowners were concerned about their well-being and recognized too, that continual burglaries would ultimately affect their property values.

At the time, their access control system was a gate opened by transmitter. Every homeowner in the community had a remote control, much like a garage door opener. One push of the button from their car and the gate opened. However, over the years many of the homes had changed ownership, and some of the homes had had renters. These residents often kept their transmitters when they moved out. It was impossible now to tell who had access to the community.

Realizing they needed tighter controls, the HOA members began researching different access control systems. They immediately ruled out one that involved punching in numbers on a keypad. They knew that delivery people like UPS and the local pizza restaurants as well as other visitors to the community would soon know the code, and then that system, like their old one, wouldn't be effective.

The HOA established a list of objectives for a replacement system. They wanted the following:

- More control over who entered their community.
- The ability to keep a record of who entered the community, which would assist in identifying suspects should future burglaries occur.
- A hands-free system so that homeowners didn't have to fumble with a remote nor be concerned with changing its batteries or replacing it when it failed, as many did.
- Reliability and long-term durability.
- A cost-effective solution.

With their agenda laid out, the Lake St. Clair HOA contacted Jim Sanford of American Access Controls to recommend a new system for their gated entry. Based on their needs, he chose a BA-440 DualBeam Barcode

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Reader from Barcode Automation, inc., a company based in Winter Springs, Florida that has specialized in access control systems since 1997.

“The BA-440 is a state-of-the-art system,” explained Sanford. “It’s full-featured yet compact. The system is also reliable and easy to use. Finally, it met every one of the objectives that the Lake St. Clair HOA had specified.” With the new system installed by American Access Controls, every homeowner in the Lake St. Clair community was given a small decal printed with an individual barcode, which they were directed to place on one of the side windows of their vehicle.

With the BA-440 Reader, only cars with the barcode decal could enter the community. Anyone else would need to call from the gate and request entrance from the homeowner they planned to visit. If a resident moved out of the community, his unique barcode number would be removed from the system, and his decal would no longer be valid. Photocopies or photographs of a barcode decal would not work with the reader. “Yes, we tried,” explained Knott from the HOA. “We couldn’t get any copies to open the gate. Also, we found that if you tried to remove the decal with the intent of placing it on another car, it came off in little pieces, rendering it useless.”

The barcode system provided the Lake St. Clair community with yet another benefit. It was able to track exactly who came and went through their gate. If a burglary occurred, they would now have a time-stamped record of the community’s traffic.

After one year the Lake St. Clair HOA evaluated their experience with the BA-440 system. They were pleased to note that it had been 100% reliable with no downtime and no malfunctions. The only maintenance required had been to periodically wipe clean the barcode reader’s lens. The homeowners had easily adjusted to the new system and seemed to like it. In contrast, they had frequently complained about the previous system.

An unexpected benefit of the system was that traffic flow through the community was reduced by 50%. The homeowners had not been aware of how often people other than residents were coming in. They even noticed a decrease in bike traffic. Although the bikes had never been a concern, the homeowners were pleased to have fewer outsiders in their neighborhood for security reasons.

The best news of all was that after a full year not a single robbery of homes or cars had occurred in the community since the barcode system’s installation.

“The BA-440 system was a great value,” summarized Jim Knott, HOA president. “Not only was it affordable and functioned without a hitch from day #1, but it has given the residents of our community something that is truly priceless – peace of mind.”