

# THE AMBER ADVOCATE

FALL 2016 Volume 9 Issue 4

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This publication was prepared under Cooperative Agreement number 2013-MU-MU-K011 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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# PROFILE: MARK SIMPSON

## TWO DECADES AFTER AMBER ALERT BEGAN, TEXAS DETECTIVE IS STILL FIGHTING TO PROTECT ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Before the AMBER Alert came into existence, a seasoned detective was determined to find the person who would abduct and kill a little girl in Arlington, Texas. On January 13, 1996, 9-year-old Amber Hagerman was snatched while riding her bicycle. Amber's abandoned body was found in an outdoor location 4 days later.

Sergeant Mark Simpson was the Task Force Supervisor for the case and worked with numerous detectives and agents for months to determine how Amber could be taken in broad daylight without anyone noticing. He also began working with broadcasters, law enforcement officers and members of the public to develop an alert that could be used when a child is abducted.

"Although we truly believed it would be a powerful tool, our goal was to make the process of issuing the AMBER Alert a quick, simple exercise," said Simpson. "The AMBER Alert is now used in all 50 states and some foreign countries. None of us thought it would ever be used beyond the Dallas-Fort Worth area."

During his 32 years with the Arlington Police, Simpson also implemented the Department's Cold Case Homicide Team, a "No Drop Policy" for domestic violence cases, a Sex Offender Registration Program and a Gang Suppression Task Force.

Although Simpson retired in 2007, he continues to present Amber's case at trainings so other law enforcement and public safety personnel might benefit from important lessons learned in the investigation of this tragic incident, while also contributing their ideas and strategies to the ongoing effort to identify and bring Amber's killer to justice.

Amber Hagerman's abduction is one of more than 20 case studies Simpson has developed while working as a consultant for the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP). While he may be soft-spoken, the detective's voice has been heard loud and clear by law enforcement officers and other public safety professionals in hundreds of training events over the past decade.

"Doing and presenting the case studies is one of the most satisfying parts of my teaching," said Simpson. "It lets me examine not only what the criminal acts were, but also how the investigators responded to a variety of scenarios and the impact of their actions."

"Child abduction investigations are like no other police response. The best way to be successful is to preplan some of our responses and be able to anticipate some of the challenges. Our training not only makes the student aware of what the issues are when they are faced with a child abduction, but also how to make good decisions to move the investigation forward."



Mark Simpson

Continued on page 4

# PROFILE: MARK SIMPSON

Continued from page 3



Mark & Donna Simpson

Simpson has worked diligently through his case study development and many years of investigative experience to identify trends and specific challenges for children, parents and police officers when children

go missing or are abducted. He shares what has and has not worked in these complex cases, collaborating with and informing law enforcement, families and community in a relevant and understandable way that resonates with audiences across the U.S. and internationally.

“When Amber Hagerman was abducted in 1996, there was not much training available in how to prosecute the investigation,” he said. “The program is not just instructors delivering lectures, it is that special group of investigators who have done the job, learned the lessons and are able to communicate those lessons to others.”

One of the most notable attributes when you meet Simpson is his humility. Despite all of his accomplishments, he is dedicated and driven to do more to help children. Besides offering the case studies, Simpson also teaches courses on Advanced Strategies in Child Abduction Investigations; Major Crimes Investigations Teams; Advanced Cold Case and Long Term Missing Cases; Search, Canvass, and Recovery Strategies; and “Build A Course” classes. He also assists AATTAP with important curriculum development and technical assistance projects in a number of key areas, including tribal child protection

initiatives and work with survivors and their families.

“For all of us who find a calling to crimes against children; the victims and those who perpetrate atrocities against them, there is always something we fall back on as an anchor to reality. For me it is my bride of 42 years, Donna,” said Simpson. “Throughout my career, she has been the one who kept me grounded in reality, pushing me when I needed it and supporting me in every way.”

Simpson does occasionally take a break and loves to go duck hunting with “a good dog, black coffee and the sounds and smells of a new day’s dawn.”

Back at work, he continues to look for ways to promote AMBER Alert initiatives and programs, and to build and strengthen awareness and knowledge through effective training and resources. Simpson takes great satisfaction in the fact that the program has been expanded to include work on understanding, identifying and responding to the rapidly-growing crime of human trafficking.

“We are changing the way we look at young girls and boys that wind up engaging in prostitution and related forms of involuntary servitude,” he said. “In the past they were often identified as suspects, when in fact they too were victims who found themselves in a situation they didn’t know how to escape from.”

For Mark Simpson and so many others, a vigilant focus on Amber Hagerman’s case will not cease until her murder is solved. It is also likely Simpson will remain ever-focused on combatting child abduction and other crimes against children, tirelessly working to help other law enforcement officers do the same. ☺

# A PIONEER MOVES ON

## MINNESOTA'S LONGTIME AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR ACCEPTS NEW POSITION

Minnesota AMBER Alert Coordinator Janell Rasmussen has stepped down after setting up the state's AMBER Alert Program and overseeing the recovery of abducted children for the past 16 years. Rasmussen now serves as the Deputy Director for the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minneapolis, where she plans to continue her work in protecting children.

"This has been the most meaningful work that I have ever done," said Rasmussen. "I can point blank say, kids are alive today because of the AMBER Alert program."

Minnesota was the 7th state in the U.S. to implement a statewide AMBER Alert program, along with a missing and endangered persons alert through the Minnesota Crime Alert Network for cases not meeting AMBER Alert criteria.

"One of my fondest memories was the very first interstate success with Utah," said Rasmussen. "The work between the two states in this case and the many interstate cases that followed were a direct result of the training and relationships developed for AMBER Alert coordinators."

The case occurred in 2003, when an 11-year-old girl was abducted in Minnesota and police had information the suspected abductor was taking the child to Utah. Utah issued the AMBER Alert. A Utah State trooper monitored one of the highways likely to be used by the suspect and calculated the

approximate travel time from Minnesota. Moments later the trooper recognized the vehicle based on the description in the AMBER Alert. The suspect was arrested and the child was recovered safely.

"I cannot tell you how hard it is to see Janell leave," said James Walters, AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program Director. "Janell has been such an important part of the AMBER Alert program not only in Minnesota but everywhere else. She had been a vital mentor and provided guidance to AMBER Alert coordinators and Missing Person Clearinghouse managers across the country."

Rasmussen credits the U.S. Department of Justice, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Fox Valley Technical College and her colleagues for helping make the AMBER Alert program a success. "When children were abducted, we were ready to work together to bring them home," she said.



Minnesota AMBER Alert Coordinator Janell Rasmussen

# CART: CHILD ABDUCTION

## WASHINGTON CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE TEAM PUTS HEAT ON PERPETRATORS INVOLVED IN COLD CASES

The Tacoma, Washington, Child Abduction Response Team (CART) is breaking new ground by investigating the rapes and murders of two girls that happened three decades ago. Michella Welch, 12, was found shortly after she disappeared on March 26, 1986, in Puget Park. Jennifer Bastian, 13, vanished from a Tacoma park on August 4, 1986, and was found 24 days later.

“I wanted to do something for the 30-year anniversaries and at the same time I knew new information could be released to the public in order to elicit new tips,” said Lindsey Wade, Tacoma Police Cold Case Detective and Assistant CART Coordinator. “These cases are well known in our area and the public is still very interested in solving the cases.”

While an AMBER Alert was not issued, the team held a press conference that received local and national attention. No canvassing or searching was needed, but the CART tip line was activated and a leads management system is being used to manage and prioritize all information. More than 125 tips have come in so far and they are still being received.

Investigators initially believed the same person killed both girls, but DNA evidence later indicated two different suspects were involved. More than 60 members of the CART

are investigating new tips and re-interviewing witnesses.

“We just need to know who this person is so we either need to do something or know it is over for him and he can’t hurt other people,” said Pattie Bastian in an interview with KING-TV.

Detectives have more than 2,000 possible suspects, with DNA samples collected on more than 100 of them. However, none of the samples have matched a convicted offender, so many of those sampled have been eliminated as suspects.

“Knowing we have two different suspects changed the investigations in many ways,” added Wade. “Many suspects were eliminated previously because they were not available for one of the crimes or because they were in jail or out of the area.”

The CART also used a new type of DNA testing called “phenotyping” that looks for unique or distinguishing traits. This testing makes it possible to predict elements of a person’s physical appearance.

Wade suggested other CART programs may want to take on cold cases because it can strengthen skills and build experience for



Tacoma CART certification exercise

# RESPONSE TEAMS

team members while working to bring resolution to a long-term missing case. “Using a cold case for a CART activation also allows the team to work through many of the same challenges they would face during a real-time activation with a slower pace and less stress,” she said.

Working on the cases in conjunction with an important anniversary year also proved to be an effective way to maximize media attention. With such a large response, the team also learned that social media should be carefully monitored because so many people are using the sites to share details about these cases.

In 2013, the Tacoma Police Department CART became the first team certified in Washington State. The CART covers the city of Tacoma and is made up of 12 multidisciplinary agencies. The team has been activated 4 times and team members assisted a neighboring jurisdiction with a child abduction homicide in 2014.

Wade has been with the Tacoma Police Department for 19 years. Her first abduction homicide case involved a 12-year-old girl in 2007. The suspect was arrested 4 days later and he was linked to an unsolved abduction and rape of an 11-year-old girl in 2000. The



1986 Welch and Bastian cases on which the Tacoma CART is working represent two of 156 unsolved homicides and long-term missing person cases in the state.

“I have always been passionate about solving crimes against children,” she said. “I feel they are the worst crimes imaginable and children are truly innocent victims who deserve professional and dedicated men and women in law enforcement to seek justice for them.”

## AUTHORITIES WARN OF FAKE FLORIDA FIREFIGHTERS SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN

The cities of Clearwater and Palm Harbor, Florida, issued a warning about a group of men claiming to be firefighters who are seeking information about children in those areas. The men claim the information will be “put into the AMBER Alert system.” Police say the men are not firefighters and that no such registry exists with information on where children live, and that law enforcement or other municipal agencies would not collect that information.

# BEYOND AMBER ALERTS

## MORE STATES ARE USING OTHER ALERTS FOR CASES THAT DO NOT MEET AMBER ALERT CRITERIA

The AMBER Alert has become a phenomenal tool to recover abducted children. As of August 2016, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports AMBER Alerts have led to the successful recoveries of 830 children.

Despite its success, AMBER Alert partners and others have struggled to find ways to notify the public for help in locating people who do not meet AMBER Alert criteria. Some states have developed their own alerts for cases not meeting the criteria of their AMBER Alert plans.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, issued a guide for creating missing and endangered person advisories. Additionally, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has released a variety of resources to assist law enforcement in missing child cases with recent publications on missing children with special needs and long-term missing child cases.

In an ongoing effort to do the best work possible in safely locating missing persons, states continue to develop other types of alerts to meet specific needs. Recent examples include:

- **Wisconsin** has issued more than 100 Silver Alerts since their program began 2 years ago. The alerts are used for missing people over the age of 60 and who suffer from Alzheimer's or another cognitive disorder. The Silver Alerts appear on more than 3,700 lottery terminals in the state.
- **Michigan** recently created a statewide active shooter alert system. The legislation was spurred after a shooting spree in Kalamazoo that left 6 people dead and 2 seriously injured. The Michigan State Police sends alerts via radio, television and text messages when there are "urgent and immediate threats" to public safety.
- **Michigan** will also issue a Blue Alert if a law enforcement officer is killed or seriously injured in the line of duty. Legislators backed the alert because a suspect who is willing to kill or injure an officer is a serious danger to the public. Michigan is believed to be the 25th state to adopt the Blue Alert system when it began on February 1, 2016.
- The **New Mexico** legislature passed a bill that creates a notification system for missing people with severe physical, mental or developmental disabilities. The "Brittany Alert" is named for Brittany Redford Gonzales, a 25-year-old woman with the intellectual capacity of an 11-year-old who was missing for 18 days. An AMBER Alert was not issued in her case because she was too old to meet the alert's criteria.
- **New Jersey** is now issuing a Missing Vulnerable Person (MVP) alert for missing persons with mental, intellectual or developmental disabilities. The program represents a voluntary effort between law enforcement agencies and the media. Alerts are broadcasted as often as possible during the first 3 hours, and then in less frequent intervals at the request of the law enforcement agency.
- **Oregon** has developed and implemented the Take Me Home program to help locate and safely recover people who have difficulty communicating with others. Organizers hope it will help elderly people with dementia, children with special needs

such as autism, as well as others with communication challenges. Family members can take loved ones to a local law enforcement agency to have their picture taken, provide contact information and an address for use in the event they become missing or endangered.

- An **Idaho** woman has started a petition to create a voluntary email alert system every time a missing person report is filed in the state.
- Parents of autistic children are asking the state of **Arizona** to create a “Puzzle Alert” to help find missing people with autism. Parents assert that autistic children are particularly at risk because of their intense attraction to water. The National Autism Association reports drowning is among the leading causes of death of individuals with autism, and moreover that 48% of children with autism attempt to wander from a safe environment, a rate nearly 4 times higher than unaffected children.

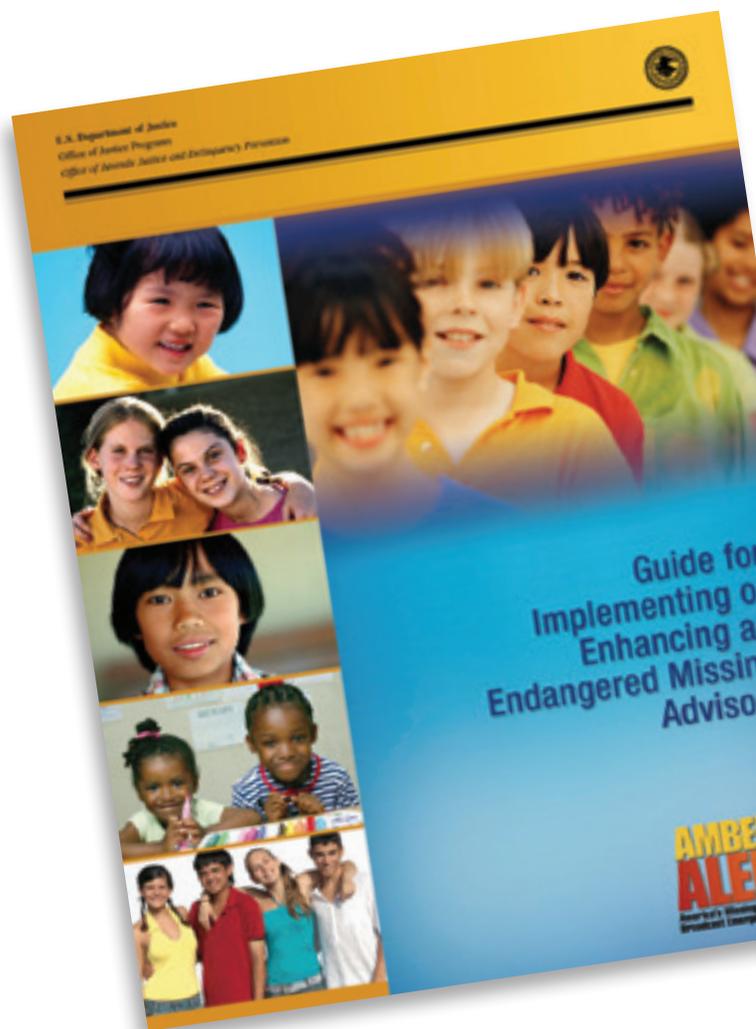
While law enforcement and public safety officials generally agree on the absolute importance of public alerts in missing and endangered person incidents, there is shared concern in being careful to not desensitize the public with too many alerts, causing them to ‘tune out’ too frequent notifications.

Arizona AMBER Alert Coordinator Art Brooks is reserving judgment on whether the state needs a Puzzle Alert. “We still have an Endangered Persons Alert which would cover those instances but it will be interesting to see what happens with this,” said Brooks.

Michigan AMBER Alert Coordinator Sarah Krebs is concerned too many alerts will cause

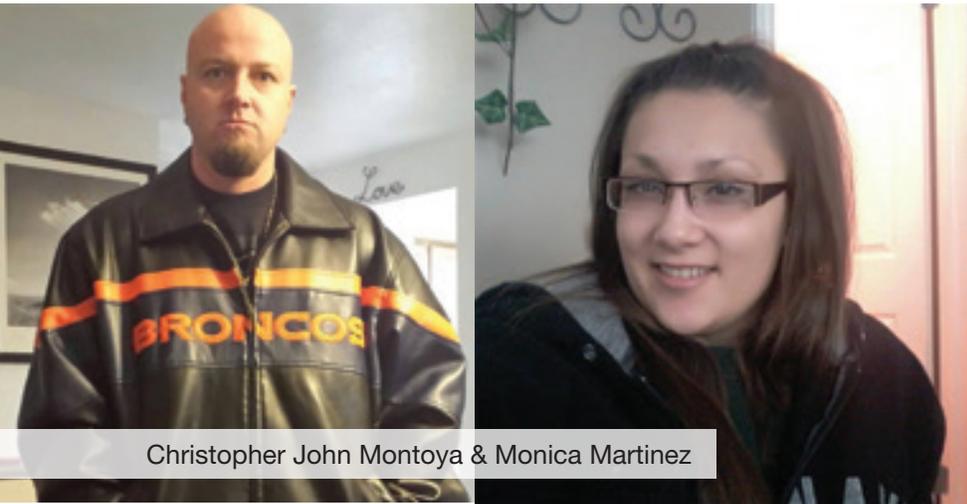
AMBER Alerts to become as annoying to people as car alarms. “I don’t agree with making a color coded alert for every cause,” said Krebs. “The more government alerts that are created and disseminated, the less effective the AMBER Alert will be.”

Visit NCMEC’s Publications Page for investigative and community resources for missing children. For a copy of the Endangered Missing Advisory Guide click [here](#).



# ON THE FRONT LINES:

## SOCIAL MEDIA SPREADS AMBER ALERT ACROSS STATE LINES TO SAVE TWO UTAH SISTERS



Christopher John Montoya & Monica Martinez

It started with a scuffle at the Utah Division of Child and Family Services on May 5, 2016. Christopher Montoya and Monica Martinez were “combative, threatening and agitated” because they could no longer see their two daughters. The courts had taken away the couple’s custody rights and witnesses said they appeared to be under the influence of drugs.

Christopher John Montoya and Monica Martinez left the agency and drove to the babysitter’s location for 3-year-old Marae Montoya and her 11-month-old sister Cynthia. The couple grabbed the two children without permission from their legal guardian and drove away in a white 4-door Cadillac sedan.

Clinton, Utah, Police Sergeant Matt Fawbush was assigned to the case after a call from the babysitter came in at 3:08 p.m. The Clinton Police Department had never issued an AMBER Alert and it was also the first time the 14-year law enforcement veteran had to consider issuing an alert.

“I tried to remain calm and rely on my training and experience,” said Fawbush. “I have been a member of the Davis County Child Abduction Response Team since 2007 and actively involved in many cases; however no prior AMBER Alerts. I also attended several training sessions in state and out of state on the topic of missing and abducted children.”

Fawbush started gathering information from family members, witnesses and investigating officers. The police department assessed the incident against the AMBER Alert criteria and determined the children were in danger for the following reasons:

- The parents were believed to be under the influence of a controlled substance.
- Both parents had mental health issues, violent tendencies and were transient.
- The couple no longer had custody and had a no-contact court order based upon a history of domestic violence while the children were present.

“I had a sense of urgency and wanted to cover all aspects of the investigation to assure the quick and safe recovery of the children,” said Fawbush.

A Missing/Endangered Advisory went out to law enforcement at 7:43 p.m. and the statewide AMBER Alert was issued at 10:39 p.m. Fawbush also reached out to law enforcement in Colorado in case the suspects traveled through that state.

“The decision to issue the AMBER alert could have been sooner,” said Fawbush. “There were a few problems getting the alert entered and issued in a timely manner.”

A clerk at the Motel 6 in Gallup, New Mexico, recognized the suspects when the couple requested a room around 2:00 a.m. the next day. The clerk saw the AMBER Alert on social media, verified the vehicle matched the description in the alert and notified police.

“The media played a huge role in disseminating the information to the public on a large scale, which ultimately helped with the recovery of the children,” said Fawbush.

Gina McNeil has been Utah’s AMBER Alert Coordinator for nearly 3 years. She is also the state’s Missing Persons Clearinghouse Manager and has been actively involved in all 43 AMBER Alerts issued by Utah. McNeil has helped to develop and strengthen Utah’s child abduction alert system since its inception in 2002.

“Any time a missing child is located safely it is a happy occasion,” said McNeil. “I think we

have one of the best AMBER Alert programs in the Nation and the AMBER Alert has saved the lives of hundreds of children. There is nothing better than that.”

The Utah AMBER Alert Committee has a review with law enforcement agencies after each alert is issued. The review is a chance to find out what worked and what can be done better the next time.

“You learn from every alert and continue to improve the system each time,” said McNeil.

“Communication is the key,” added Fawbush. “Everyone involved in the process must be on the same page and work together to fine tune the procedures set in place.”

The suspects were returned to Utah and initially charged with two counts each of child kidnapping and one count of burglary. They both pleaded guilty to two counts of custodial interference. Their two children are now safe with their legal guardian. 🌟



Utah AMBER Alert Coordinator Gina McNeil & Clinton, Utah, Police Sergeant Matt Fawbush

# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## NEW FRAMEWORK SHOWS HOW TO SET UP A CHILD ABDUCTION ALERT AROUND THE WORLD



AMBER Alert Europe and the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children have created a framework on how to set up a rapid emergency child alert system. Europe has 24 countries that issue AMBER Alerts or child abduction alerts using a different name. The framework is made up of 14 elements that include criteria, call handling capacity, dissemination methods, cross border issues and training. ☺

## FACEBOOK EXPANDING AMBER ALERTS TO OTHER COUNTRIES



Facebook has already partnered with the U.S., Canada, the Netherlands and South Korea to disseminate AMBER Alerts directly on its newsfeeds. Now the social media giant is working to assist similar alert programs in Australia, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Jamaica. ☺

## THE BAHAMAS WILL NOW ISSUE MARCO ALERTS FOR CHILD ABDUCTION CASES



An 11-year-old boy who was abducted and murdered 5 years ago has prompted the Bahamas to issue child abduction alerts, and to end the practice of waiting 24 hours to begin searching for a missing child. The new regulations are part of Marco's Law, named after Marco Archer who was abducted, sexually abused and murdered.

The Mandatory Action Rescuing Children Operation (MARCO) Alert is similar to the U.S. AMBER Alert and will be disseminated to the media. The victim's family is also asking the country to create a sex offender registry. ☺

## CANADIAN SUPERHEROES GATHER TO HONOR CHILD ABDUCTION VICTIMS

More than 100 children wearing superhero costumes participated in a decathlon in Calgary, Canada, on August 20, 2016, to honor child abduction murder victims. Just earlier this summer, 5-year-old Taliyah Marsman was kidnapped and murdered. The event was sponsored by the family of Nathan O'Brien, a 5-year-old who disappeared with his grandparents 2-and-a-half years ago. Nathan's case sparked the longest AMBER Alert in Canadian history. 🍷



## VIGIL HELD FOR ONTARIO VICTIM FOUND AFTER AN AMBER ALERT WAS ISSUED

A candlelight vigil was held in Hamilton, Canada, on August 9, 2016, for an 11-year-old disabled boy who was found dead after an AMBER Alert had been issued for him. Finnigan Danne had a neuromuscular disorder and limited mobility, and went missing on August 6th. Neighborhood volunteers took part in the search and his body was found the next day in a culvert. Authorities determined Finnigan died from drowning shortly after the alert was issued. 🍷



## MALTA BEGINS AMBER ALERT PROGRAM

The southern European island nation is the latest country to implement an AMBER Alert program. Malta is the 17th European nation to have a child abduction alert and the 4th country to join AMBER Alert Europe, an international non-profit organization that networks with other countries to recover abducted children. The system sends alerts to TV, radio, road signs, public transport, text messages, email, website banners, advertising screens, PC screensavers, smartphone apps and social media. 🍷



# AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## SURVIVORS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SPEAK AT TRIBAL CHILD PROTECTION SYMPOSIUM

More than 200 participants from at least 25 tribes gathered in Scottsdale, Arizona, for the 2016 National Symposium on Tribal Child Protection and AMBER in Indian Country Leadership Forum. The events were held July 18-21, 2016, and were hosted by the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Program.

The Leadership Forum addressed the limited resources and staffing tribal agencies experience by bringing together tribal law enforcement executives in a discussion of how leaders can address missing and exploited children issues within their communities.

With the rise of technology-facilitated crimes against children in Indian Country, the National Symposium on Tribal Child Protection focused on addressing child protection issues including child exploitation, human trafficking, and endangered and abducted children. The event promoted development of cohesive community programs that can create long term solutions to these issues.

Presentations and discussions emphasized improving crime prevention efforts and successful prosecution of those guilty of committing technology-facilitated crimes against children in Indian country. Issues of limited resources and staffing of tribal agencies were also addressed.

Featured speakers included:

- A Native American survivor of human sex trafficking, gangs and addiction
- The detective who helped convict “The Big Rig Killer,” a truck driver implicated in the murders of 14 women, including a 19-year-old Native American woman
- Sex trafficking victim advocate Cindy McCain, who offered participants important information on resources available for sex trafficking victims

More information from the Symposium and Leadership Forum will be featured in the next issue of The AMBER Advocate. ☺



## CHILD FOUND SAFE AFTER NAVAJO NATION ISSUES AMBER ALERT

The Navajo Nation issued an AMBER Alert on August 11, 2016, for a 4-year-old girl who went missing with her mother in Pine Springs, Arizona. Tribal law enforcement authorities determined the child to be in danger because her mother is mentally disabled and has a speech delay. The alert was canceled after the child and her mother were found safe. ☺

# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS

## AMBER ALERT COURSES ARE AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA

AMBER Alert training is offered across the country, and can be brought to your area. The AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) offers local, state, regional and tribal law enforcement agencies the opportunity to schedule a specific training from their vast offering of courses and training modules, as well as the ability to custom-design training for their specific needs through its 'Build a Course' option.

The direct cost of the training (instructor expenses, training material and logistics support) are covered by AATTAP. Hosting agencies assist in marketing and outreach, providing an appropriate venue and onsite coordination. More information can be found on AMBER Alert's Training Courses webpage.



## GROUNDBREAKING FOR MEMORIAL PARK HONORING UTAH ABDUCTION MURDER VICTIM

Elaine Runyan shared shovels and stories with local dignitaries for a groundbreaking ceremony in Sunset, Utah, on May 17, 2016, to honor her daughter Rachael Runyan, who was abducted and murdered by a stranger in the very same park on August 26, 1982. Rachael was just 3 years old.

A \$50,000 reward is being offered to anyone who can help solve Rachael's murder. "It has been nearly 34 years since we lost our baby," said Runyan. "We appeal to the public to help us solve this case and finally bring justice to Rachael." The memorial will recognize what happened to Rachael and all missing children. A motorcycle ride, kids fair and ribbon cutting was also held at the groundbreaking event to raise funds for the memorial and the AMBER Alert program.



## MEMORIAL HELD FOR MISSOURI ABDUCTION MURDER VICTIM

Family, friends and law enforcement officers held a birthday celebration on August 18, 2016, on what would have been Hailey Owens' 13th birthday. An AMBER Alert was issued after Owens was abducted and ultimately murdered 2-and-a-half years ago. The Missouri State Highway Patrol marked the event by announcing a new software program to make the AMBER Alert more effective and timely.



# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS

## STUDY SAYS MONTANA HAS THE MOST AMBER ALERTS PER CAPITA



A research group study found that Montana has issued the most AMBER Alerts per 100,000 residents. AMBER Alert officials noted Montana has a low population and many locations separated by long distances. They added the alerts are especially helpful to spread the word about abduction incidents.

## COLORADO WILL CONTINUE SENDING AMBER ALERTS DURING LATE HOURS



An AMBER Alert was issued in Colorado on August 12, 2016, at 12:42 a.m. for a 5-year-old girl alleged to have been abducted. The girl was found later in the morning, and her mother was taken into custody on kidnapping, child abuse and other charges. The Colorado Bureau of Investigations emphasized the AMBER Alert is an important tool to find both suspects and children, and encouraged the public not to silence emergency notifications during the nighttime hours. This case proved that those who receive or hear these late-night alerts can provide lifesaving witness and identification information on both children and suspects involved in these critical incidents.

## MOST CHILD ABDUCTION VICTIMS KNOW THEIR ABDUCTOR



A review of statistics provided by the National Center for Missing and Abducted Children (NCMEC) has found that most abducted children are rarely taken by strangers. Nearly all children whose abductions were reported through AMBER Alert systems from 2006 to 2014 were taken by someone they knew. In 43 percent of cases occurring in that 8-year span, the abductor was identified as the child's father. The missing child's mother was responsible for kidnapping in approximately 24 percent of cases reviewed.

"The assumption is, if they're with their father, the child is safe. That's not always the case," advised Bob Lowery, Vice President for the Missing Children Division of NCMEC. The study found 77 percent of children featured in AMBER Alerts were taken from a home. Lowery also noted that more abductors are using social media to lure children.

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# THE AMBER ADVOCATE