

THE AMBER ADVOCATE

SUMMER 2013 Volume 7 Issue 2

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ALERT

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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WHEN A CHILD IS TAKEN:

FAMILIES GATHER TO HELP OTHERS DURING CHILD ABDUCTIONS

Some parents found their son or daughter safe. Some learned their child was murdered. But some still do not know what happened to their little boy or girl. The fifty people gathered May 6-7 in Jacksonville, Florida for the Family Roundtable include parents, siblings and survivors of child abductions.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has brought the Family Roundtable together 8 times as part of the National AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program. Each time family members and survivors of child abductions provide insight on what law enforcement officers, media representatives, prosecutors and other AMBER Alert partners can do better when a child is taken.

Cameron Moulton was only 2 years old when his 10-year-old brother Christopher was kidnapped and brutally stabbed to death in 1995. Cameron said it took him years before he could finally talk about his feelings about losing his brother.

"I grew up afterwards with this weight on my shoulders," he said. "The feeling you have on a day-to-day basis and not being able to talk about having a brother or sister...or withdrawing from people so you do not have to tell them."

Jessica Clifton's 8-year-old sister Madelyn Rae was murdered by a 14-year-old neighbor in 2006.

She said it was very difficult to be isolated from her parents during such a traumatic time. "A detective called me at 2 a.m. and told me I could not go back to my parent's home," she said. "I understand it now, but I did not understand it then. I just wanted to help and I felt helpless during the entire investigation."

"I grew up afterwards with this weight on my shoulders."

Many of the siblings of child abduction victims said they felt forgotten. They said they want to be "true survivors" and not just victims. Participants helped make a list of things a family should know when a child is abducted. Here are some of comments shared:

- You are not alone.
- You are not crazy.
- You are not at fault.
- You will be a suspect.
- You do not have to know what to do.
- You need to take care of your basic needs: sleep, eat and drink.

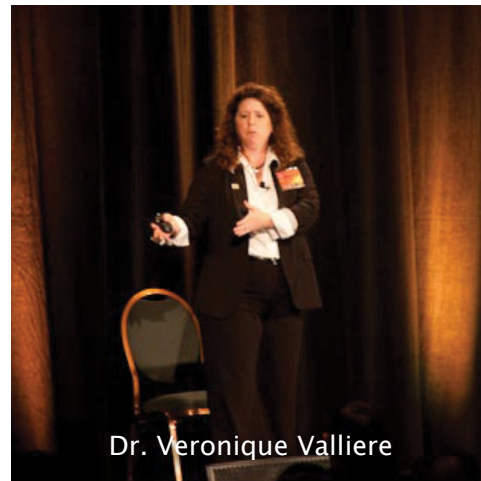
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"I just wanted to help and I felt helpless during the entire investigation."



WHEN A CHILD IS TAKEN

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During a breakout session with siblings and survivors, participants offered some advice to family members and those who come into contact with families during a child abduction:

- Law enforcement should tell the family first about new leads and keep the press out of the recovery site.
- Siblings should be assertive, keep their identity and not be afraid to get counseling.
- Parents should give their children age appropriate tasks to help in the case.
- The media should have clear boundaries.
- Social media is a place where rumors and hurtful comments can spread and not be retracted.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Veronique Valliere shared with the group some of her findings from working with violent and non-violent sex offenders for more than 20 years. She said pedophilia is not curable, only containable. She added that 90% of the pedophile population will sexually assault anyone while the remaining 10% only assault children.

Dr. Valliere said strict housing ordinances for sex offenders actually causes sexual assault rates to increase. However, she said sex offenders should be closely watched because they prey on fear, ignorance and not being held accountable.

The 2-day roundtable also included a case study on lessons learned from the Jaycee Dugard case. Dugard was kidnapped in 1991 and held hostage by a convicted sex offender for more than 18 years. Participants also heard a presentation on how technology is used to exploit children and ways parents can prevent exploitation.

Some of the parents had children who were abducted and taken to another country. They said it was difficult to get law enforcement in other countries to respond because it was often considered a custody dispute and it was very difficult to communicate. They also said the media and the public showed very little interest in their plight.

“It is clear that many of the issues facing families involved in domestic U.S. abductions were different than those encountered on the international side,” concluded Phil Keith, Program Director for the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program. “It seemed that law enforcement was poorly informed on what could be done for the victim’s family. Because of the danger of serious bodily injury or death, the police in the U.S. are more focused and consequently so is the media.” ☺

PROFILE: KRISTINA BOMBA

VETERAN AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR STILL FINDING NEW WAYS TO BRING ABDUCTED CHILDREN HOME

Kristina Bomba became Colorado's AMBER Alert Coordinator when very few states had an AMBER Alert program. Bomba had been working as an intelligence analyst for the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for four years when she was asked to help launch the nation's eighth statewide child abduction alert on April 1, 2002.

"It was a learning experience," Bomba said. "There were only a few states to ask 'how do you do this?' and find out what was working."

Colorado was the first state where the legislature passed a law to create an AMBER Alert system. Lawmakers put the plan in place but Bomba had to reach out to other partners to make it work. "We had to clarify everyone's role," she said.

Broadcasters wanted a single point of contact instead of having more than 200 law enforcement agencies issuing an alert. They also wanted to make sure that measures were in place to ensure each alert was legitimate.

It started with a three-step process: 1) the law enforcement agency would contact CBI; 2) CBI would call the radio station in charge of the state's Emergency Alert System; and 3) CBI would send emails and faxes to law enforcement and broadcasters.

"It was a big learning curve for law enforcement," said Bomba. "Initially they were calling us on everything. We had to teach them the criteria and whether or not the alert could be used."

For example, Colorado issued 12 AMBER Alerts in 2003 but lately only 3 or 4 alerts are activated each year. "I think we have done better because of education and everyone now understands the criteria better," added Bomba. "The public has also been receptive to the AMBER Alert because we have been cautious not to overuse it."

Colorado now has a much more robust system to distribute AMBER Alerts. The alerts go out to electronic highway signs, lottery terminals, local busses, trains and underground utility companies. The public can register to receive the alerts by email and a new website will automatically post the alerts online and send the messages to the public through an RSS feed.

Beyond changes in technology, Bomba has also noticed more states using the same criteria for the AMBER Alert. "Everybody was all over the board. Now we are similar," she said. Colorado legislators had to change the state's AMBER Alert law so Colorado could issue alerts originating out of other states.

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Kristina Bomba



ON THE FRONT LINES

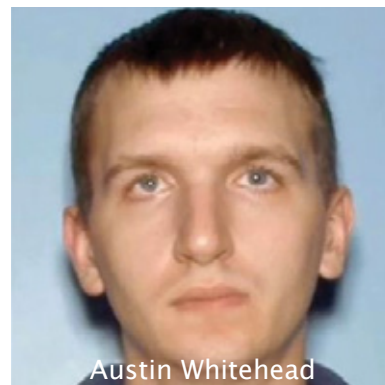
TENNESSEE TRUCKERS BRING AMBER ALERT SUSPECT TO A STOP



Tennessee AMBER Alert Coordinator Mike Cox



Austin Morris & Jim Lowe



Austin Whitehead

A suspect accused of assaulting his wife and snatching their 2-year-old son was no match for a trio of truckers and highway patrol troopers who responded to an AMBER Alert in Tennessee. On January 9, 2013, 23-year-old Austin Whitehead allegedly got into a violent fight with his wife and then took their son with him in his Pontiac Grand Am.

The Houston County Sheriff's Office wanted to issue an AMBER Alert because of the assault and because Whitehead had allegedly threatened suicide. Tennessee AMBER Alert Coordinator Mike Cox said there was no question the alert met the state's criteria.

"We thought he was a danger to the child because of his possible mental state and the injuries to his wife," said Cox.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) oversees the statewide AMBER Alert program. Cox was assigned to be the state AMBER Alert coordinator in September 2012 and this was the third time he helped initiate an alert. "You can practice all day long but you know it is different when it is real," he said. "Every time I lie down at night I think, 'I hope I made the right decision and did the right thing.'"

After all the information was gathered the alert went out at 1:20 p.m. to law enforcement, media, transportation, state lottery and the National Weather Service. The alert can go out statewide

or to three individual regions. Because authorities believed Whitehead was traveling to Covington, Georgia, Cox decided to send the alert to only the middle and eastern regions.

Moments after truck driver Jim Lowe saw the AMBER Alert on the electronic highway signs, he spotted the Pontiac Grand Am about 170 miles from the reported abduction. He used his radio to notify the trucks ahead of him and three truckers started to box the suspect in and slow him down.

"It is pretty wild," noted Cox. "In almost 22 years of law enforcement I have never seen anything like it."

Tennessee Highway Patrol dispatchers notified troopers and they arrested Whitehead and safely recovered the young boy from the car. The AMBER Alert was cancelled less than two hours after it was issued.

"I am just glad that little kid is safe at home tonight in his own bed," Lowe told a reporter. "I guess that is just where God meant for me to be."

Tennessee has had five AMBER Alerts since Cox became the coordinator, and he said he is grateful for everyone who got the program up and running before he started. "I have a child of my own and it makes me feel good," he said. "It is about as fulfilling as anything we can do in law enforcement. Nothing is more important than children." ☺

PROFILE: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Even though she has been around longer than most people in the AMBER Alert Program, Bomba is still eager to learn from others and share with others. "Networking is probably the most important thing you can do," she said.

Colorado's first AMBER Alert coordinator grew up wanting to be in law enforcement, even visited with a private investigator specializing in missing person cases when she was in high school. Now she is the mother of a 6-year-old son and nearly 2-year-old daughter and finds enormous satisfaction bringing abducted children home. "I am more sensitive since I had children," she said. "I have more of a connection with the cases."

Editor's Note: Shortly after Bomba was interviewed for this story she was transferred to an analyst position at the Colorado State Police. CBI Assistant Director of Investigations Steve Johnson wrote this when he announced the change: "I cannot begin to describe the impact Kristina has had for children and victims of crime in her 15 and 1/2 years with CBI. Kristina has raised the bar for us and we are a better organization for her efforts and dedication and will look for many of her traits and qualities in her replacement." 🍷



Kristina Bomba



Kristina with her children

"I cannot begin to describe the impact Kristina has had for children and victims of crime in her 15 and 1/2 years with CBI. Kristina has raised the bar for us and we are a better organization for her efforts and dedication."

AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

THE FIGHT TO KEEP NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN SAFE



Casey Jo Pipestem excelled at basketball and poetry in high school and was known for her lanky build and big smile. But the Native American teen was shuffled from home to home because her mother was attempting to get out of a difficult relationship.

She started running away and later began trading sex for drugs as a prostitute at truck stops near Oklahoma City. Casey was only 19 when her body was found after being tossed from a bridge. Authorities believe she had been murdered by an “Interstate” serial killer.

Pipestem’s story was just one shared at the Child Protection in Indian Country Meeting to show that Native American children may be the most vulnerable of all children when they are missing. The meeting held May 7-8 in Jacksonville, Florida included law enforcement representatives from 19 tribes residing in 8 States. Organizers hope the training will help end what was called an “epidemic” of missing and runaway children from tribal communities.

Jim Walters, the Native American liaison for the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program, shared that Native American children have the highest levels of runaway and throwaway children of any ethnic group. “They typically leave their homes and support systems for urban areas,” said Walters. “They are also less

likely to have access to positive resources to help them while they are away.”

When Native American children end up in a placement shelter or foster home, Walters said they are often placed with people outside their race and they are twice as likely to run away. “Native American boys are five times more likely to run away from placement than Caucasian boys,” he added.

Why do they run? Participants offered some possible factors, including:

- Children move from house to house when their parents are not around
- The child believes a better life can be found away from home
- The child believes the home has overly restrictive rules
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Drug and alcohol use by parents or the teen and peers
- Poverty and/or hopelessness

Janet Draper is a police officer and the director of Children and Family Services for the Potawatomi Nation. She said checkerboard jurisdictions in tribal communities also create problems for placing a child. “State agencies make it difficult when they take a child into custody and they do not notify us or the tribe,” she said. “Once we are

notified we transfer the case to the tribe and start over.”

Presenters noted that people living outside tribal lands often do not understand the culture or Indian Child Welfare laws. Also, some communities do not have the needed resources and infrastructure or a centralized source of reporting for cases involving children.

UNIQUE DANGERS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN AND GIRLS

Indigenous women have been exploited since the first Europeans came to America. Today studies show that Native American women and girls are significantly overrepresented in the sex trade industry.

An analysis of 2007 prostitution arrest data in the county encompassing Minneapolis found that 24% of arrests involved Native American women, more than 12 times their representation in the county's population. Other studies found similar results in Washington, Oregon and Montana.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did the largest study ever done on family violence and found that 39% of Native American women were victims of intimate partner violence, the highest rate for all ethnic groups.

Other studies found that Native American women have the highest rate of sexual assault and rape:

7.7 per 1,000 women versus 1.5 for African American women, 1.1 for White women, 0.6 for Hispanic women and 0.2 for Asian women.

TEAM APPROACH

Participants learned that a team approach is capable of making a big difference in protecting Native American children. Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) can be developed in tribal communities to respond with the needed resources and expertise to handle missing and abducted child cases. An Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force can be used to protect children from online predators.

Some tribes have already implemented Multi Disciplinary Teams (MDT) or Child Protection Teams (CPT) made up of representatives from law enforcement, social services, schools, health, courts and elders. These teams are responsible for prevention, intervention, investigations and aftercare for children.

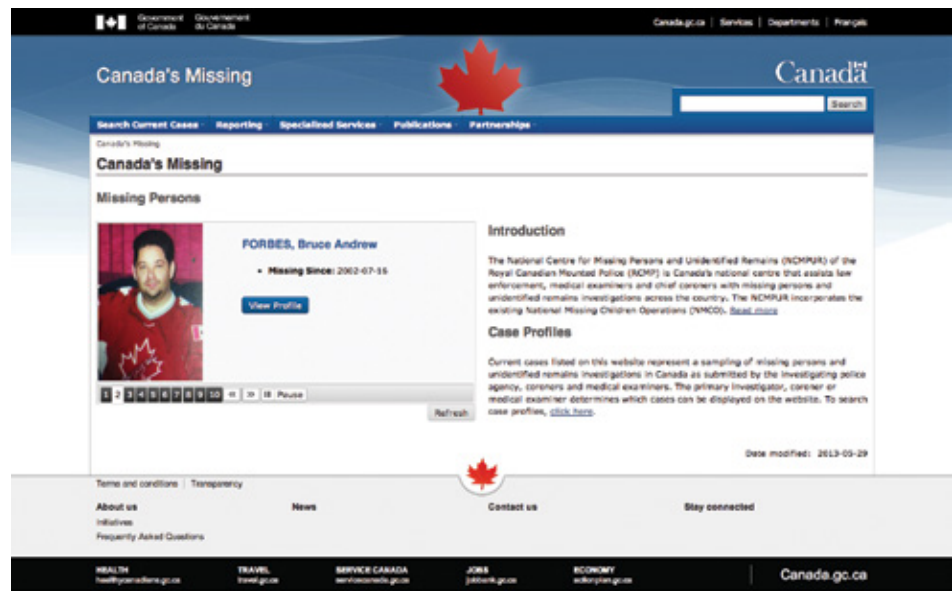
Native Americans have strong beliefs about family relationships and extended families. Some tribal communities have been able to reduce the number of runaways by placing a child with other family members or even with families from the same tribe. Successful programs also helped in cultural immersion, mentoring and community service. The ultimate goal is to make sure Native American children are protected and those who prey on children are aggressively prosecuted. 🌸



AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

CANADA UNVEILS WEBSITE FOR MISSING PERSONS AND UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains has a new website to help the public report tips on missing person cases and identify remains. Some cases are very old but police officers, medical examiners and coroners are still hoping the public can provide answers. The website can be found at www.canadasmissing.ca. ☺



NEWFOUNDLAND GETS NEW AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR

Constable Monica Murphy has been named as the new AMBER Alert coordinator for Newfoundland. Murphy replaces Staff Sergeant Sean Ennis who helped set up the province's AMBER Alert Program. "It has been an honor for me to work along side you all, and to be part of the AMBER Alert program in Canada," said Ennis. "We should never forget the assistance and mentoring provided to us by our United States partners, which has allowed us to arrive where we find ourselves today." ☺



ODDS & ENDS

WEST VIRGINIA EXPANDS AMBER ALERT PROGRAM

Law enforcement officers in West Virginia may no longer have to “confirm” a child has been abducted in order to issue an AMBER Alert. The state senate approved a bill in April that would allow the alert to be issued for any missing child. Legislators also approved the “Kelsey Smith Act” that lets police compel a wireless provider to issue a “ping” on the phone of anyone considered to be in danger. Police in Kansas were denied access to Kelsey Smith’s cell phone number for 4 days because she had not dialed 911. Her body was found 45 minutes after a ping finally went out. *Read more:* <http://wapo.st/18fh4bn>



NEW YORK CABBIES GET ONLINE AMBER ALERT TRAINING

About 24,000 taxi and limo drivers in Queens, New York are receiving online training on the AMBER Alert system. The training program found at fhvinstitute.org teaches drivers how to respond to AMBER Alerts. Drivers are able to receive AMBER Alerts directly through their dispatcher devices. Drivers can also become members of a “neighborhood watch on wheels” to help make the streets safer.



NEW MEXICO LAUNCHES SILVER ALERT FOR MISSING SENIOR CITIZENS

New Mexico now has a Silver Alert to help find missing elderly people. Governor Susan Martinez signed a law creating a statewide Silver Alert in July. The alert will notify law enforcement, media and others when a person 50 years or older with Alzheimer’s, dementia or a brain injury goes missing.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/19rYT3a>



MICHIGAN PROMOTES AMBER ALERT AWARENESS WEEK

For the second year Michigan celebrated AMBER Alert Awareness Week to help promote awareness of efforts to recover abducted, missing and endangered children. Since its inception in 2001, the Michigan AMBER Alert Program has been activated 327 times and has helped to recover 321 children. Six children are still missing. This statewide AMBER Alert Week was held this year on May 19-25.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/11GUWTc>



THERE'S MORE TO LEARN

CHECK OUT UPCOMING AMBER ALERT TRAINING

Minneapolis, MN - July 22-25, 2013

- Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children (ISMAC)
- Canvassing, Search and Recovery Strategies for Abducted Children
- Child Sex Trafficking: Law Enforcement Response

Tulsa, OK - August 19-22, 2013

- Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children (ISMAC)
- Child Sex Trafficking: Law Enforcement Response
- Specialized Investigative Techniques in Child Abduction Cases (SITCAC)

Baltimore, MD - September 16-19, 2013

- Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children (ISMAC)
- Child Abduction Response Team (CART)
- Specialized Investigative Techniques in Child Abduction Cases (SITCAC)

Indianapolis, IN - November 18-20, 2013

- Basic Forensic Response to Missing and Abducted Children
- Canvassing, Search and Recovery Strategies for Abducted Children
- Leadership for Missing and Abducted Children (LMAC)

FIND OUT MORE AND REGISTER AT AMBER-NET.ORG

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