

**“I HAD TO BECOME A  
WARRIOR MOM”**

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**AMBER<sup>®</sup>  
ALERT**



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This publication was prepared under Cooperative Agreement number 2017-MC-FX-K003 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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# “I HAD TO BECOME A WARRIOR MOM”

## Mother of murdered Navajo girl challenges tribal, federal, state and local leaders to be vigilant at 2019 AMBER Alert in Indian Country Symposium



Pamela Foster

Through the nightmare of learning her daughter had been murdered, Pamela Foster knew she must start a movement for missing and abducted Native American children. On May 2, 2016, her 11-year-old daughter, Ashlynn Mike, was kidnapped and lured to accept a ride home from a stranger within the Navajo Reservation in Arizona.

“It’s the day my world shattered in a million pieces,” said Foster. “I had to become a warrior mom. I had to be brave and fight for my daughter who is gone too soon.”

At the National AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AIIC) Symposium in Albuquerque, New Mexico, July 30-August 1, 2019, Foster shared the helplessness she felt after learning her daughter was missing—and police were not prepared to issue an AMBER Alert.

“My family, friends and community wanted to help but they didn’t know where to start,” said Foster. “Everyone was in a state of confusion

and I learned others were facing the same problem. I promised to do all I could to fix the loopholes and fight for the AMBER Alert in Indian Country.”

More than 200 federal, state, local and tribal leaders attended the symposium to learn how to implement the Ashlynn Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act of 2018, a law providing funding and resources to integrate state and regional AMBER Alert Plans and resources with federally recognized tribes. The federal legislation was a direct response to the events surrounding Ashlynn’s death.

The symposium debuted a video describing Foster’s inspiration, through her incredible ordeal, to become an advocate for other children in Indian Country. The video concludes with Pam visiting a memorial site for her daughter. As she was praying and spreading corn pollen into the air, a large rainbow appeared in the sky, and then a second rainbow near the place Ashlynn’s body was found.

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# “I HAD TO BECOME A WARRIOR MOM”

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2019 National AMBER Alert in Indian Country Symposium attendees

“When I saw the rainbow, that tells you Ashlynnne was there,” said Jim Walters, AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) administrator, “There is no greater strength than a parent who has been through a tragedy. Pamela is helping make sure every child in Indian Country has the same protection as a child living in the city.”

The symposium was made possible by the U.S. Department of Justice’s (US-DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and presented by AATTAP.

Brad Russ, National Criminal Justice Training Center Director at Fox Valley Technical College, of which AATTAP is a part, attended the symposium.

“I remember hearing about Ashlynnne Mike when it first occurred and how upset we all were,” said Russ. “Jim Walters knew we couldn’t just be upset. He said we need to do something. He went to Shiprock to talk to elders, law enforcement leaders and

others on Capitol Hill to make sure everyone knew we needed Indian Country legislation to stop a tragedy like this from happening again.”

## **The Ashlynnne Mike AICC Act In Action**

The symposium provided an overview of what has been accomplished since the Ashlynnne Mike Act was signed into law. Chyrl Jones, Deputy Administrator for the OJJDP, announced that all 23 tribes in New Mexico are fully participating in the AMBER Alert program.

“New Mexico is the first state to achieve 100 percent access,” said Jones. “Our goal is to develop a national network of AMBER Alert plans and ensure all communities benefit from this important tool.”

The symposium included representatives from 22 tribes located across 34 states. The Navajo Nation now has an AMBER Alert program up and running which spans 27,000 square miles in New Mexico, Utah and Arizona.

Harlan Cleveland, Emergency Management Director for the Navajo Division of Public Safety, urged tribes to get more training to set up their own AMBER Alert program.

"Take a proactive approach, don't be reactive," said Cleveland, "Be committed when you get that call. It is going to happen. You will get that call."

He recommended tribal leaders work with state AMBER Alert coordinators, other stakeholders and elected officials to "piggyback" on existing AMBER Alert programs. Cleveland recounted how the tribe resolved a case that didn't meet the AMBER Alert criteria.

"We issued an Endangered Missing Person Advisory, which is a powerful tool," said Cleveland. "The suspect called in and said, 'Take my photo down.' Getting the child back is your reward when you are done."

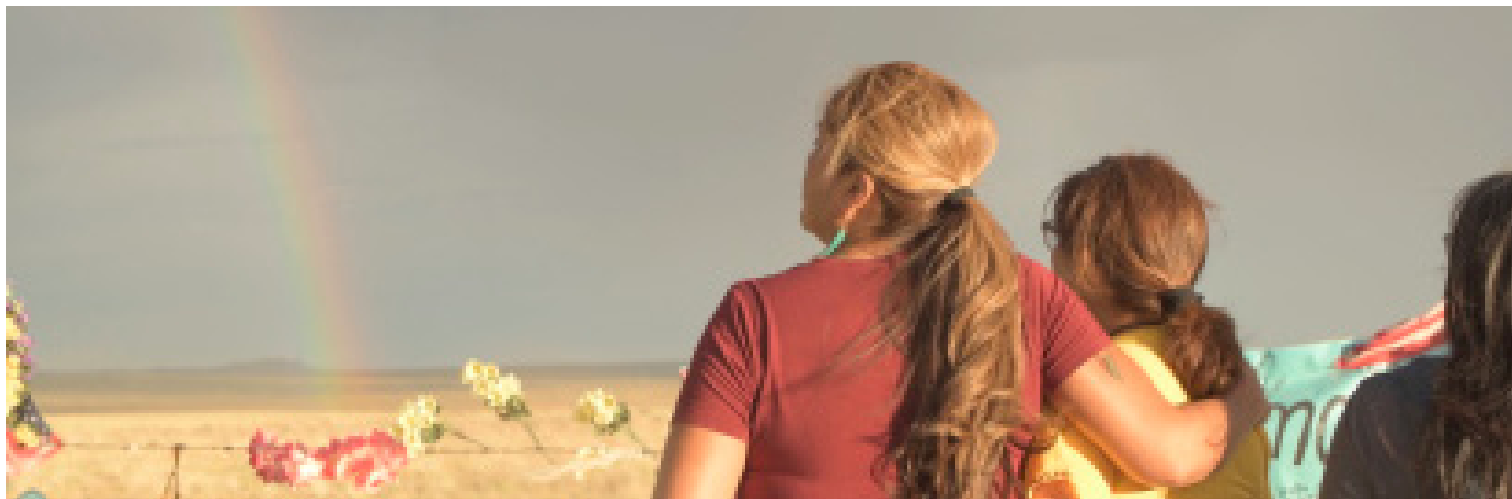
Regina Chacon, Bureau New Mexico Department of Public Safety Bureau Chief, suggested tribal leaders should have the "heart of a servant" while working with other partners during AMBER Alerts.

"When a child is missing or abducted, there should be no borders," said Chacon. "But we still need to be respectful of the sovereignty and borders of others."

The FBI estimates more than 7,000 Native American children are missing in the U.S. OJJDP awarded \$1.8 million last year to develop training and technical assistance for missing and exploited children in tribal communities, plus an additional \$1 million specifically to support the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country law.

"We are fully aware that when it comes to the safety of our children in Indian Country, the task before us is substantial," said John C. Anderson, U.S. Attorney, District of New Mexico. "Native Americans, including Native American children, experience violence at rates higher than any other ethnic group in the United States. The Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act is a positive step toward that goal."

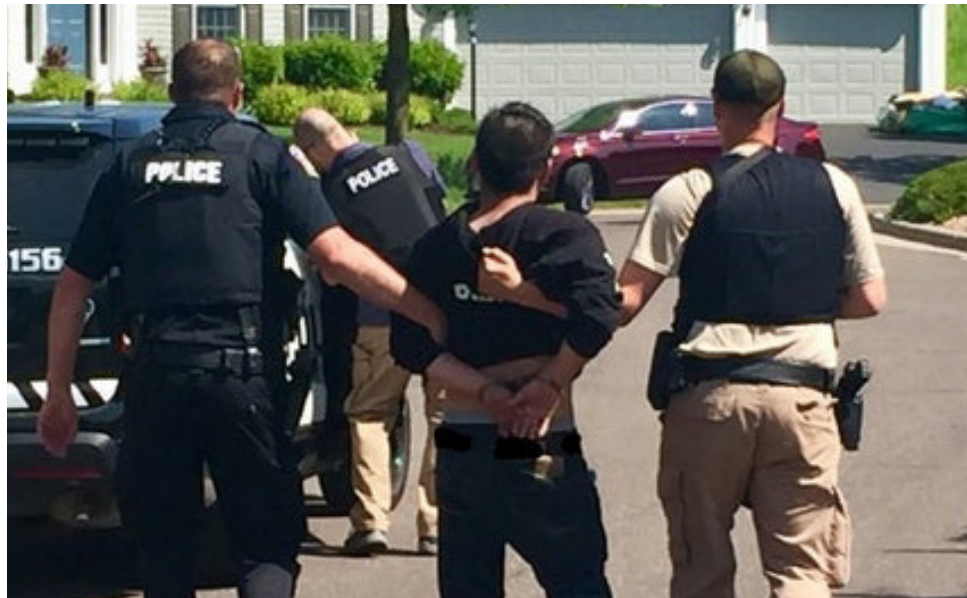
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# AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:



Janell Twardowski, Minnesota AMBER Alert Coordinator



## GOOD SAMARITAN + AMBER ALERT = SAFE RETURN OF TWO ABDUCTED GIRLS IN MINNESOTA

The sun was barely up when a man hiding in the backseat jumped up inside his ex-girlfriend's van in Cottage Grove, Minnesota. At 6:34 a.m., June 7, 2019, Jeffrey Lo allegedly struck the woman in the head with his pistol. Police say Lo pushed her into the passenger seat and drove off with the woman and their two daughters, ages one and three.

After traveling a short distance, the woman was able to get out of the vehicle. Lo sped away with the two girls in the van.

A passerby saw the "extremely distraught" and bloodied woman leaping away from the van and screaming that her children had just been kidnapped. They attempted to follow the van and quickly called police.

"A Good Samaritan stopped to help the mother and immediately called 911," said Janell Twardowski, Minnesota's AMBER Alert

Coordinator. "The local police department then called the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to activate the AMBER Alert."

A request was made for an AMBER Alert at 7:25 a.m.

### Early Threats

In May 2019, a judge had granted a protective order for the woman against Lo. According to court records, Lo was abusive to the woman after the birth of their first daughter and threatened to kill her.

A few months earlier she said Lo started pulling her hair and punching her arm for sleeping on the floor instead of with him. The judge also gave sole custody of the girls to their mother.

"Her immediate call to 911 was crucial in ensuring a fast and immediate response,



"Cottage Grove Public Safety Chief Pete Koerner told a reporter. "It was a tragic incident. I really feel for those children."

Koerner said officers had a lot of things running through their heads after learning the suspect had a handgun.

### **The AMBER Alert**

After determining the case met the proper criteria, an AMBER Alert was issued at 8:27 a.m. The alert was sent to all partners throughout Minnesota, including notifications to a law enforcement helicopter and K9 officers.

The original alert was issued with the wrong vehicle model. An updated alert was quickly sent out with the correct information. Because the mother was taken immediately to the hospital to treat her injuries, authorities had to issue the alert with only the ages of the children--but not their names.

The limited information did not stop the public from calling in tips to help law enforcement agencies narrow their search. Officers found the missing van parked on a street a few miles from the original kidnapping location, but no one was inside.

The police helicopter spotted the suspect in heavy underbrush. Officers on foot found Lo lying on his back, clutching the girls next to his chest. Both children were recovered unharmed at 10:27 a.m., exactly two hours after the AMBER Alert was issued.

"It was a relief when the children were located safe," said Twardowski. "It's the exact outcome we all hope for in these instances."

### **Preparation Is Essential**

Minnesota has issued 36 AMBER Alerts, but

this was the first alert for Twardowski. She said training and having solid procedures in place were critical in getting the AMBER Alert out so effectively.

"With every AMBER Alert, time is of the essence to disseminate the information out to the public," she said. "Everyone in law enforcement makes sure they are ready, so children can be recovered as quickly as possible."

This case included help from a Minnesota State Patrol helicopter, the Department of Natural Resources, three local K-9 units and ten other law enforcement agencies.

### **Good Samaritan Honors**

The Cottage Grove Police Department presented Christina Kelley with the Citizen Commendation Award on August 21, 2019, for stopping to assist the mother and helping police recover her children.

"I feel like I was meant to be there to help her, save her and get those kids back," Kelley said. "I don't think I would change anything I did that day. I would still help, because that's just who I am."

The mother of the abducted children said five cars passed by as she screamed for help. Kelley was the first one to stop.

"She changed my life that day," the mother told a reporter. "I could have died that day."



Left to Right: Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Superintendent Drew Evans, Cottage Grove Police Chief Pete Koerner, Christina Kelley

# FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT NETWORK



## **IDAHO AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR BELIEVES OUR EMOTIONS AND PASSIONS WILL HELP SAVE ABDUCTED CHILDREN**

Tanea Parmenter has been the Idaho AMBER Alert Co-Coordinator since July 2018. She has been the state's Missing Person Clearinghouse Program Manager since 2012, just one year after she started with the Idaho State Police. Parmenter works closely with Co-Coordinator Leila McNeill on all calls and AMBER Alert requests.

Even before Parmenter began her career in law enforcement, she had always been interested in cases involving missing persons, child abductions and exploitation. Parmenter volunteered to help the clearinghouse manager and learned how to support law enforcement agencies with investigations. She goes on "ride alongs" with officers and attends roundtable events to discuss long-term missing cases.

### **WHAT IS UNIQUE TO YOUR AMBER ALERT/MISSING PERSONS PROGRAM, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES IT SUCCESSFUL?**

This year we are making major strides by streamlining how we handle AMBER Alert requests. The agency entering a Missing Person record into the state system and NCIC can select a box to request an AMBER Alert. The alert request with photos and information goes to NCIC and to our 24/7 control center. The call center contacts me and I log in to review the request and contact the agency if needed. If approved, I click one button that triggers the distribution of the AMBER Alert to our alerting software, OnSolve's CodeRed.

This improves the process because an agency doesn't have to fill out a separate form and we don't have to manually type in the message. The agency controls what information is disseminated, and it's done instantly. In the past, most delays for AMBER Alerts involved waiting to receive the needed forms. This is speeding up the process from up to two hours to just 15 minutes.

### **WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO FIND MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?**

I love my career with the Idaho State Police, and helping locate missing or abducted children is my passion. I see the need for local agencies to have more training, but they don't always have the funding to send officers. I take the knowledge I gain at any training and bring it back to my state.

### **WHAT EMOTIONAL TOLL DO YOU FACE DURING AN AMBER ALERT?**

Any type of missing person case can be emotional, especially when dealing with the family. During an AMBER Alert call, no matter how many I have issued in the past, I continue to get that "gut check." I have thoughts of "Is this a needed tool?" or "If I issue this alert, will the abductor respond negatively to the child?" as well as "If I don't issue this alert, is there another way to help recover the missing person?"

Each call brings stress and adrenaline. I feel completely wiped out, but my mind won't shut off. I still want to make sure I did everything correctly and asked the right questions. I don't think I ever want to change how I feel because I think it helps us have a 100% return success rate. That



**“Each call brings stress and adrenaline. I feel completely wiped out, but my mind won’t shut off. I still want to make sure I did everything correctly and asked the right questions. I don’t think I ever want to change how I feel because I think it helps us have a 100% return success rate.”**

passion and drive also is felt by everyone at the investigating agency. They know I am there for them 24/7 and I am willing to assist in whatever capacity they need. If I shut off my emotional response, I wouldn’t feel I was doing everything possible to recover a child safely.

**WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE SUCCESSES IN WORKING A MISSING CHILD CASE?**

Recently I had a request for an AMBER Alert for a mentally-challenged and physically handicapped 16-year-old female who had been the victim of online luring. This happened at 2 a.m. in a small town. The on-call officer worked in the narcotics unit and was not a part of the missing persons crime unit. He called my cell phone and said, “This is so new to me. I have never had a case like this and I don’t want to miss anything. Can you please help.” This type of situation is what motivates me to go to training, keep my policies updated and keep on-call 24/7.

We worked together to make sure we didn’t miss a step. The suspect wasn’t known, so I reached out to our cybercrimes unit to see if we could get any information from the victim’s digital tablet. Because the AMBER Alert had a credible tip on Facebook, we contacted the jurisdictions of the possible suspect. Our dispatchers did amazing research and found multiple addresses for the suspect in different states. I worked with the investigator to contact those jurisdictions to do welfare checks. It turned out great. We walked through our steps,

stayed on target, worked across jurisdictions and located the child safely.

**HOW HAVE YOUR CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES STRENGTHENED YOUR COMMITMENT TO HELPING ENDANGERED, MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?**

Every call, every request, continues to strengthen my passion and commitment. Also, having the opportunity to meet with mothers, fathers and family members of those who are missing. My heart goes out to them. I put myself in their place and realize I would never want to feel that pain or loss.

**HOW DOES BEING A PARENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN WHAT YOU DO AT WORK?**

As a single parent, one of my worst fears would be to have my child missing. I think the first time it truly hit me was during CEO training at NCMEC years ago. It was the first time I met Colleen Nick and heard her story. At the time, my daughter was the same age as when Morgan went missing. I couldn’t control the tears as Colleen relived her worst day. I imagined myself in that same desperation, loss and pain. I could truly feel the tightening in my chest. That was the day I dedicated my career to helping prevent these calls from happening. I have focused on training and prevention. I help the local agencies get the standard operating procedures in place and practice them before the actual call. I provide best practices, resources and training and I’m there for the agencies at any time.

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# “I HAD TO BECOME A WARRIOR MOM”

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Funding from the Act supported a National Survey of Federally Recognized Tribes and State AMBER Alert Coordinators to assess the various needs, challenges and obstacles encountered by tribes in the integration of state or regional AMBER Alert communication plans.

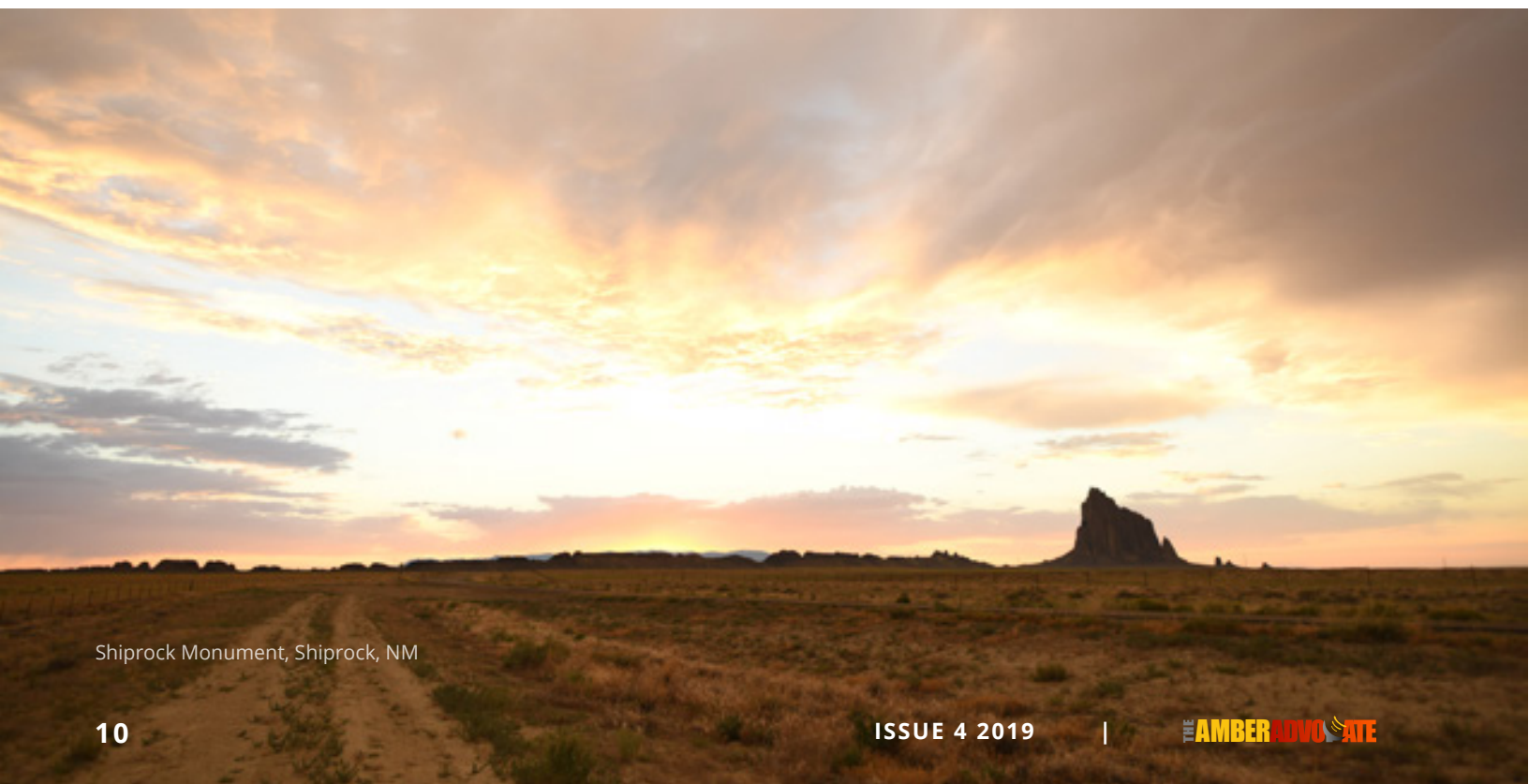
Researchers attempted to contact 573 tribes and were able to collect data from 100 tribes—including the ten tribes involved with the 2007 AMBER Alert in Indian Country Pilot Project. At the time of the study, findings included the following:

- 86 tribes are authorized to take part in state AMBER Alert plans
- 76 tribes have an emergency plan for a child abduction
- 25 tribes use their own systems to disseminate an alert

- 50 tribes say more training is needed to implement alert plans

Participants at the symposium included representatives from these and other tribes, pueblos and nations (shown here in alphabetical order): Blackfeet, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Comanche, Crow, Fort Peck, Hoopa Valley, Hopi, Isleta, Muckleshoot, Nak NU WE Sha Yakama, Navajo, Oneida, Prairie Band of Potawatomi, Pueblo of Pojuaque, Santa Clara Pueblo, Tohono O’odham, Umatilla, Washoe, White Mountain Apache, Yurok, and Zuni.

Pamela Foster concluded her remarks with a challenge to everyone. “We need to make changes to make children safe,” she said. “The children in your community rely on you. Do it for your children and your grandchildren. Don’t wait until it’s too late.”



Shiprock Monument, Shiprock, NM

# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## THE BAHAMAS LAUNCHES CHILD ABDUCTION ALERT PROGRAM

The Bahamas now has the MARCO Alert, a child abduction alert system patterned after the AMBER Alert. Government and law enforcement leaders gathered on August 21, 2019, for a signing ceremony for the new law. The alert is named for Marco Archer who went missing in 2011 and was later found dead. The MARCO Alert will notify law enforcement and the public through traditional and social media. Minister of National Security Marvin Dames noted that the following day, August 22, was Marco's birthday and he would have turned 19-years-old. "He once indicated to his mother that he wanted to be a policeman to arrest the 'bad guys'," Minister Dames shared. "While Marco may never suit up in a uniform, Marco's Law and Marco's Alert, both named in his honor, will ensure that he will always play a critical role in assisting the police in arresting the bad guys." 🍷



Bahamas Minister of National Security Marvin Dames

## AUSTRALIAN CITY BEGINS USING BILLBOARDS TO POST AMBER ALERTS

The Brisbane, Australia, City Council started a partnership with the Outdoor Media Association (OMA) to begin posting AMBER Alerts on outdoor signs. The digital signs will post the abducted child's photo and other information within 30 minutes after an AMBER Alert is issued. "We hope the Brisbane Amber Alerts pilot program will inform how we can build a system to roll out Amber Alerts across Australia," said Charmaine Moldrich, OMA CEO. The OMA is working with the Out of Home Advertising Association of America and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the United States on the pilot program. 🍷



## EUROPEAN OFFICERS MEET IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC FOR AMBER ALERT TRAINING

More than 40 law enforcement officers from 16 countries gathered in Prague for the second European Expert Network on Missing Children Forum. The training held September 4-6, 2019, included real-life missing person cases to learn about the best practices for safely recovering missing and abducted children. "When a child goes missing and they need support from colleagues in another country, they will know exactly who to call at 3 a.m. in the morning," said Frank Hoen, Chairman and Founder of AMBER Alert Europe. "This will highly contribute to saving more missing children, which of course is our ultimate goal." 🍷





# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS



## TEXAS ISSUES THE MOST AMBER ALERTS IN 2018

Texas, the birthplace of the AMBER Alert, led the nation in the number of alerts issued in the U.S. in 2018. The top three states for alerts are: Texas with 23, Ohio with 15 and California with 11 alerts. For more information on the findings of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children regarding AMBER Alerts in 2018, visit: <http://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/amber> under 'AMBER Alert Reports.' 🍷



## TEXAS POLICE OFFICER FIRED FOR FAILING TO FIND ABDUCTED GIRL

A Forest Hill, Texas, police officer has been fired for failing to find a kidnapped girl after searching a hotel room where she was later found. An AMBER Alert was issued for an eight-year-old girl on May 19, 2019. Other police officers came back to the hotel two hours later after getting a tip that the suspect's vehicle was in the hotel parking lot. Officers breached the door and found the child within minutes in the same hotel room that had been searched earlier. 🍷

## CALIFORNIA OFFICERS CONDUCT CHILD ABDUCTION TRAINING

Law enforcement officers gathered in Anderson, California, for a mock exercise that involved a six-year-old girl being abducted while riding her bicycle to her friend's house. A total of 80 officers from 19 different agencies participated in the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) training held August 21, 2019. 🍷



## MORE STATES USING BLUE ALERT PROGRAMS

Both New Hampshire and Vermont will now issue Blue Alerts when a law enforcement officer is injured, killed or missing. New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed a bill on June 21, 2019, authorizing the Blue Alert program. The New Hampshire system will use the same channels as an AMBER Alert, including radio broadcasts and state highway signs. "We hope we never have to use it," said Sununu. "But, unfortunately, we know that those days may come."

The Vermont Attorney General and Department of Public introduced its Blue Alert program on August 13. The Vermont system will disseminate messages by email, text, phone, traditional and social media, roadside and lottery signs.

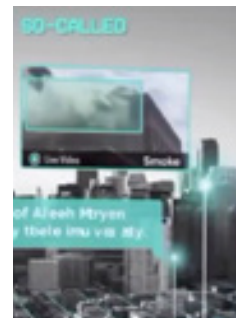
Minnesota became the first state to test the Blue Alert system, after sending a test message on August 14, 2019, to the media and subscribers to the state's alert program. Minnesota has yet to issue an actual Blue Alert. Learn more about Blue Alerts across the nation by visiting the USDOJ COPS office website at <https://cops.usdoj.gov/bluealert>. 🍷



New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu

## UTAH TESTS AI SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM WITH AMBER ALERT EXERCISE

The Utah Department of Public Safety requested \$2 million from state legislators this summer for a surveillance program that uses artificial intelligence to gather social media posts, traffic cameras and other resources. The company Banjo designed the program to be used in real-time emergencies. The Utah Attorney General's Office used it for training in an AMBER Alert situation. Legislators expressed concern about overreach and privacy violations as they considered results of testing with the state's Department of Transportation and consider expansion of the technology to other areas of state operations. 🍷



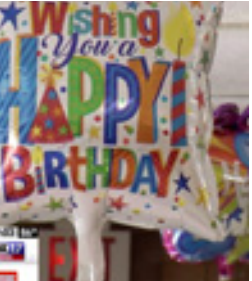
## MISSOURI ENACTS LAW TO IMPROVE STATE'S AMBER ALERT PROGRAM

Missouri Governor Mike Parson signed "Hailey's Law," that requires law enforcement officers to issue AMBER Alerts electronically and that an annual evaluation of the state's child abduction alert program is conducted. The law is named after 10-year-old Hailey Owens, who was kidnapped and murdered in 2014. 🍷



Missouri Governor Mike Parson

# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS



## TENNESSEE COMMUNITY HAS BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR MISSING CHILDREN

A family in Bedford County, Tennessee, held a birthday party for a 16-year-old girl and 13-year-old boy who have been missing for nearly seven years. An AMBER Alert was issued for Chloe Leverette and Gage Daniel when they disappeared after their grandparents were found dead in a home that caught fire. The family held a birthday party on June 30, 2019, to keep the case alive with the hope someone will see them and call police. "Every day you're looking, you're wondering, not knowing what happened where are they? It takes a part of you, a part of your soul," said mother Cheryl Daniel. 🍷



## SUSPECT SCREAMED "AMBER ALERT" WHILE SNATCHING CHILD AT WASHINGTON FESTIVAL

A man accused of trying to abduct an 11-year-old boy started yelling "AMBER Alert! AMBER Alert!" after grabbing him and trying to take him away. Spokane, Washington, police say the 26-year-old suspect tried to kidnap the boy June 30, 2019, while he and his mother were standing in line for pizza at a park festival. Witnesses grabbed the suspect and held him until police arrived. 🍷



Margie Quinn

## TENNESSEE AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR STARTS NONPROFIT TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Former Tennessee AMBER Alert Coordinator and Missing Person Clearinghouse Manager Margie Quinn founded End Slavery Tennessee, a nonprofit focused on providing healing spaces for human trafficking victims and eradicating trafficking in the state. "Through my work with the TBI [Tennessee Bureau of Investigation], I was inspired to do something more, and working with End Slavery Tennessee is just that — something more," Quin said. The organization also provides training and aftercare. 🍷



## MULTIPLE CHARGES FILED AGAINST MISSOURI MOTHER ACCUSED IN HOAX AMBER ALERT

The Missouri State Highway Patrol canceled an AMBER Alert for an infant boy after discovering the child's mother had her 16-year-old son call in the false report. The alert was issued August 1, 2019, in Rolla, Missouri, was the first AMBER Alert ever initiated by the Maries County Sheriff's Office. Officers say the woman was trying to buy time to take the infant to Arkansas while the child's father was distracted. The woman was charged with making a false report and with prostitution for allegedly paying a man to have sex with her and help her pick up her son from a bus station. 🍷



## HOMETOWN HONORS AMBER HAGERMAN WITH A MURAL

A mural was dedicated to Amber Hagerman in Arlington, Texas, the last place she was seen alive in 1996. Her disappearance and murder led to the creation of the AMBER Alert. A group gathered at a park in Arlington on July 7, 2019, to honor Amber and unveil the mural. 🍷



**WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN WITH YOUR AMBER ALERT PROGRAM AND OTHER PROGRAMS IN THE FUTURE?**

I would like to see our program grow. We have very little staff to handle the entire state. If we had additional staff members, we could provide community outreach to get information out to the parents and children. We would have enough time to offer more case analysis, make sure every missing person case has everything needed like fingerprints, DNA, dental, photos, investigator notes, etc. We could offer more training to the local agencies. My next goal is to have a multi-jurisdictional CART team in all six regions of Idaho.

**HOW HAS TRAINING HELPED YOU IN AMBER ALERT CASES?**

You can't ever stop training or practicing. No one call is the same. No one situation is like the other and no one circumstance will have the same outcome.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER AMBER ALERT PARTNERS?**

If you are not working closely with your missing person clearinghouse partner, then you need to start doing it. This should be a great partnership that works hand in hand. Also, get to know the AMBER Alert Coordinators in other states. Go to an out-of-state training or conference and network. Eventually you will need them to issue an AMBER Alert in their state for your missing child. Finally, don't stop growing, learning and studying these cases. Any information and tools you pick up now will help you in that next call. 🌟