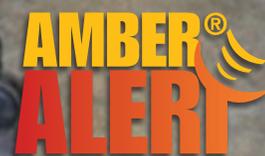


# THE AMBER ADVOCATE



## Driven to Succeed

An Arizona Child Abduction Response Team represents the value of a well-structured, well-sustained CART



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The Glendale Arizona Police Department's mobile command center, "the Blue Ox"

## Driven to Succeed

An Arizona Child Abduction Response Team leader weighs in on the value of a well-structured, outfitted, and sustained CART

*By Denise Gee Peacock*

The most effective Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs) have “the right personnel, preparation, and leadership support,” says Sergeant Patrick Beumler, who supervises the Glendale, Arizona, Police Department’s Patrol and Emergency Response Units.

Beumler has served in law enforcement 24 years, half of that time in the GPD’s Criminal Investigation Division as Special Victims Unit Supervisor, specializing in family violence and missing persons. He was a founding member of the Arizona Child Abduction Response Team in 2011, and has since responded to dozens of CART deployments throughout the state. As the state’s CART Coordinator, Beumler has collaborated on CART certification training with the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP), the FBI, U.S. Marshals, and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).

We spoke with Sergeant Beumler about some of the questions law enforcement asks during training sessions.

### **What type of person does it take to be a successful CART member?**

It takes someone willing to put a lot of time and energy into training. They need to be flexible

in their schedule for callouts, preparation, and research – and able to get their primary duties done amidst many CART tasks. It takes someone who can keep their cool during the chaos at the onset of a missing at-risk child investigation, including effectively communicating with frantic family members. It takes diligence; someone who doesn’t give up when they hit roadblocks and investigative “dead ends,” as often happens in missing child investigations. And most importantly, it takes someone who isn’t afraid to ask for help during a CART response – and to accept that help, especially from people outside their agency.

### **How can law enforcement agencies recruit personnel who are a good fit for a CART?**

Agencies could face challenges with participation if folks deemed well-suited to the work aren’t able to be recruited as they are identified. Restrictive policies may require that only members of certain squads can be CART members, but sometimes that doesn’t allow for the best talent to be recruited. Also, leadership needs to buy in to the CART concept or the CART will face challenges in pulling people away from other duties.

Continued on next page

# CART SMART: Driven to Succeed



“ Being prepared promotes confidence in those responding and those being served. Scrambling for equipment and resources is not something you want to be doing at the beginning of a deployment. Time is of the essence. ”

*Patrick Beumler, Sergeant/CART Leader,  
Glendale (AZ) Police Department*

## What are the biggest challenges in CART training?

Coordination, cost, and time. Training should ideally be conducted at the agency and regional levels, and occasionally at the state level. A good place to start is to have quarterly training at the agency and/or regional level, and perhaps annually at the state level, depending on the CART's needs. Training should reinforce the basics, such as neighborhood and roadside canvassing, using leads management software, and setting up and dismantling command posts. Advanced classes in investigative technology are also a plus. And at least annually, the CART should analyze case studies or conduct tabletop exercises. Using local resources and personnel obviously saves money, but so does utilizing quality training provided at no cost by the AATTAP and National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College, as well as NCMEC.

## How important is preparation?

Knowing what may be needed for a call-out is a challenge until you've been through a couple of them. Items needed for a command post can be as simple as a pop-up canopy and folding table, but to operate for any length of time outdoors,

a canopy, lighting, staging area, and other logistics come into play. That's why CARTs mobilize trucks and trailers full of equipment. One of the most basic staples is the canvassing form. Until everything goes digital, using printed forms to canvass neighborhoods, or at roadside stops or roadblocks, is a must. But these tend to run short, especially when urban multi-housing/apartment complexes are involved. Each member should have a personal supply of all needed forms, and command should also have an ample supply (think banker's box full) to distribute as needed, and to replenish at the end of each deployment. The last thing you want is someone running to the station to make copies of the form at 2 a.m.

## How do you sustain effective CARTs?

Sustainability comes down to how well your CART team is recruited, the level of leadership adoption and support, the team's activity level, membership policy mandates, the quality of available resources, and the extent of training and preparation. The turnover for units within a CART can be high, since members often change assignments, retire, or get promoted; so it takes the dedication of those involved to promote the team, champion its successes, and keep it active. It should be seen as a desirable position to have – rather than an ancillary role of their primary job. Also, agencies can lose interest in participating in a CART if apathy or a lack of succession planning sets in.

## For agencies not sure if they need a CART, what would you tell them?

A CART is a force multiplier – a treasure trove of experience to lean on during an often-tense at-risk missing child investigation. When there is little to no information to go on, and your folks are tired and depleted – but calls for service are still coming in – having CART resources

# Is Your CART Ready for Action?

Head to [AMBERAdvocate.org](https://AMBERAdvocate.org) for a checklist of questions to consider.

**Web Exclusive!**



and investigative knowledge is invaluable. There's a misconception that CARTs take over an investigation; they don't. While some law enforcement teams may have to swallow a bit

of pride to ask for help, with agency leadership commitment and support, that is less of an ask when specialized assistance is needed, especially in the wee hours of the morning.

## What's inside 'the Blue Ox'?

The Glendale (Arizona) Police Department's 600 square-foot climate-controlled CART logistics support truck and mobile command center is dubbed "the Blue Ox" because "after the large tractor trailer was painted blue, it reminded people of Paul Bunyan's giant blue ox," says Sergeant/CART Leader Patrick Beumler. The \$1.3 million crime-fighter-on-wheels was funded with \$900,000 from the Urban Areas Security Initiative and \$400,000 from the City of Glendale. "It's been a tremendous help to us," Beumler adds. Here's what it features:

- 2 operations tables
- 20 "ops" stations, each equipped with a laptop, telephone, and full radio capability
- 1 Cisco IPICS Radio Interop System
- 6 (700-800 MHz) radios
- 5 VHF radios and 4 UHF radios
- 2 Motorola XTS XTVA radio slots
- 2 (47-inch) interior video monitors
- 1 (70-inch) interior video monitor
- 2 (55-inch) exterior video monitors
- 1 TracStar RV satellite system with 2 VoIP Lines
- 4 DirectTV Receivers
- 2 Sony Mast Cameras
- A 70 KVA MQ generator and Shore 208V 3 Phase power connection



"The Blue Ox" stands ready for a CART deployment.

# ON THE FRONT LINES: Social Media SOS



From left: Two Central Texas teens reportedly were lured from home and trafficked to five houses before being found safe. The search for the girls was sparked by a Snapchat message one of the girls sent to her mother. Photos: KWTX

## Two abducted Texas teens are rescued after posting a distress plea on Snapchat

By Paul Murphy

The social media post simply read, “Help.” But it would transform a report of two runaway teens into a trafficking case requiring an AMBER Alert and intense search for the 14-year-olds.

The case unfolded on June 29, 2022, when the teens left their homes in McGregor, Texas – 20 minutes southwest of Waco, in McLennan County.

According to the girls’ families, the duo are best friends, so their parents initially thought they were staying at either of the girl’s homes. The teens later called their parents to say one of their uncles would be picking them up – but that did not happen. Then, later that night, one of the girl’s mothers was startled to find a note from her daughter stating she would “make this right.”

“I want her to know that everything is OK,” the mother told a reporter while her daughter was missing. “It doesn’t matter what she has done. I want her to just come

home. We love you no matter what. Our door is open. Come home.”

McGregor Police Department Lieutenant Ron McCurry said the situation originally did not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert. But he became more concerned after the girls were gone nearly a week.

“We were following all leads and doing everything we could to find them,” he said.

The course of the investigation would change drastically after one of the girl’s mothers shared a screengrab of a Snapchat message from her daughter. It had only one word – “Help” – but it spoke volumes. Lieutenant McCurry concluded the teens’ disappearance posed a credible threat to their safety since they were likely with an unknown, dangerous individual.

McCurry requested an AMBER Alert in the early morning hours of July 4. The Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS) issued the alert at 4:13 a.m.

Ben Patterson is the Alert Program Manager for the TxDPS. He oversees **AMBER Alerts** and other endangered missing alerts for the country's second largest state, with 29.1 million residents, 254 counties, and 1,200 incorporated cities within its 268,596 square miles. Due to its size, the Lone Star State has **18 regional AMBER Alert programs** coordinated by law enforcement and public safety personnel who work closely with Patterson.

"I always think, what if it was my child or children that were missing," Patterson said. "Children are much more accepting of adults and may not think about ulterior motives."

The AMBER Alert notified key partners: the Texas Department of Transportation, five Texas Border Intelligence Centers, the Texas Lottery Commission, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and secondary distribution groups that included the media.

The McLennan County Sheriff's Office Human Trafficking Unit, the FBI, and volunteer analysts for the **National Child Protection Task Force** joined in the search. Detectives and task force analysts were able to get information from Apple to help track

the general location for one of the victim's phones. They could also identify individuals trying to call her, including one unknown person from Waco.

McLennan County Sheriff's Office Human Trafficking Detective Joseph Scaramucci was able to pinpoint a restaurant near where they girls were being held. And though it was dark, he spotted a license plate belonging to that unknown caller from Waco.

At 2:25 a.m. on July 5, the girls were rescued from an apartment in Georgetown, Texas, about 75 miles south of Waco. The 30-year-old man holding the teens, James Robert Vanhouten, was arrested after a brief standoff with McLennan County detectives and Georgetown Police Department officers, and the girls were returned to their families.

McLennan County Sheriff Parnell McNamara **told**

reporters that after the girls ran away from home, they "fell in with some bad people and went from one place to the next. They were kept in some pretty bad places."

The teens told detectives they were forced to take drugs. One victim had left her phone at home, and though the other's phone was malfunctioning, she was fortunately able to use it when it connected to the internet. That helped her send the Snapchat SOS.



"The girls were kept in some pretty bad places and mistreated. They were very happy to be rescued."

*McLennan County Sheriff Parnell McNamara*

Continued on next page

# ON THE FRONT LINES: Social Media SOS

“They were very happy to be rescued,” McNamara said.

Vanhouten has been charged with trafficking. Two other men involved in the crime have been charged with harboring runaway children.

“We are going to make these scum bags accountable for what they did to these young girls,” McNamara said, **noting** the girls were taken to five different homes before they were found. “There will be more charges and more arrests to come. We are not going to let up.”

McCurry is thankful for the “absolutely incredible” response received from the public once the AMBER Alert was sent. “It’s a very valuable resource.”

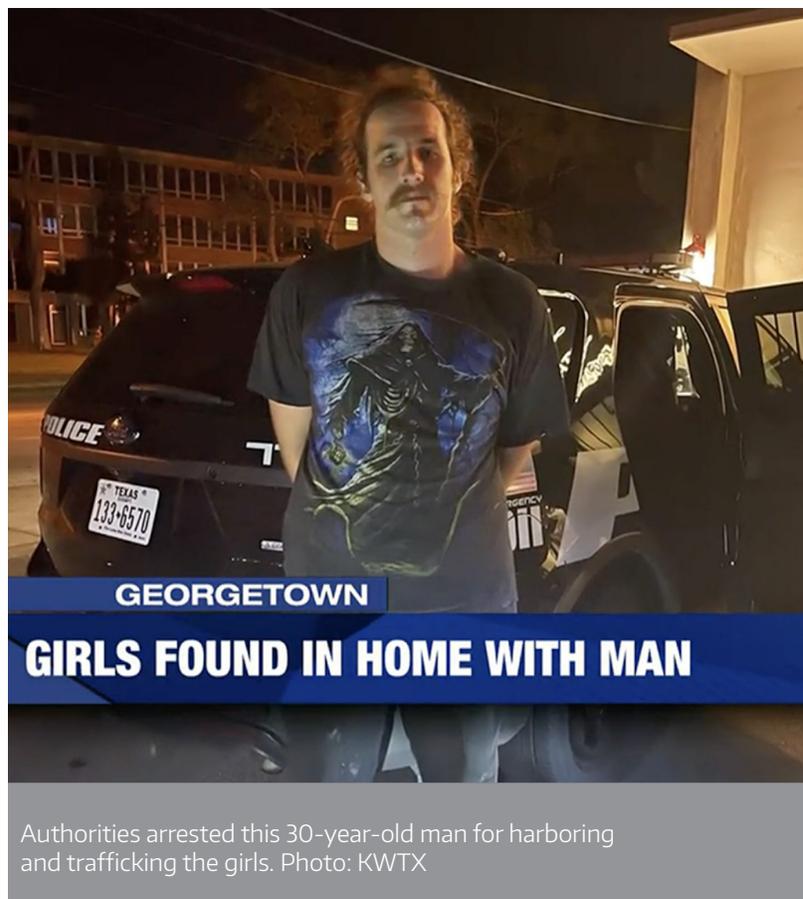
Patterson, too, was relieved to learn the girls were found safe. Since “there are many children who are not recovered, these girls were very fortunate,” he said.

According to reports, more than 50,000 people are trafficked each year in the U.S., and a quarter of those victims pass through Texas. The National Human Trafficking Hotline has registered more than 5,800 trafficking cases since 2007 and more than 800 cases in 2019. Investigators say the suspects in this case were not part of a larger trafficking ring but just took advantage of the situation.

Texas is the birthplace of the AMBER Alert, the tool now used worldwide to alert the public about child abductions. The alert was created shortly after Amber Hagerman was kidnapped and murdered on January 15, 1996, in Arlington, Texas.

Patterson said Texas offers missing person alert training in 30 locations twice a year. He said this case offers a valuable lesson on how missing and abducted children’s cases can evolve. “Be prepared,” he said. “What could be seen as a routine situation can easily change.”

It’s also evident “that we need to take missing kids seriously,” Scaramucci added. “The AMBER Alert put everyone on edge,” helping people take the situation “more seriously than [believing the girls to be] just a couple of runaways.”

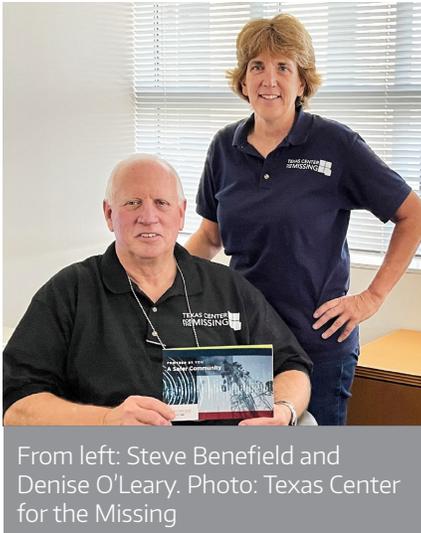


# FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT

## Passing the Baton

The new Emergency Alert Coordinator for the Texas Center for the Missing hits the ground running – with help from his dynamic predecessor

By Denise Gee Peacock



From left: Steve Benefield and Denise O'Leary. Photo: Texas Center for the Missing

For 24 years Denise O'Leary's main goal has been helping families in the Houston-Galveston area find their missing loved ones. Now, she says, another family duty calls: Helping her aging parents. "It's time I gave them more of my focus."

Before leaving the TCM, however, O'Leary was intent on training "the new me" – Steve Benefield, the new Emergency Alert Coordinator (EAC) for the Houston nonprofit **Texas Center for the Missing (TCM)**. The TCM provides crisis support to the families of missing persons, training for law enforcement, and preventative safety programs to children and their parents. The TCM EAC also doubles as the Region 9 AMBER Alert coordination point for the Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS).

Benefield joins the TCM after recently retiring from the

Houston Police Department (HPD) after a 39-year career there. His HPD tenure was primarily youth centered. He taught Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) to school kids, investigated missing persons reports, handled child abuse/internet crimes against children cases, and child custody interference situations – "all of which makes him well suited for this job," O'Leary said.

"It's a big job with big responsibilities," Benefield adds, noting the TCM's 93 percent success rate is one of the highest in the nation. And the region he serves is the second largest in the country – covering 14 counties with more than 5 million people and 300 law enforcement agencies.

Benefield is no stranger to the challenges posed by the vast region or its youngest, most vulnerable inhabitants. "This job will allow me to continue helping kids," he said. "I've always been inclined to help people who can't help themselves."

So far, Benefield is off to a good start. Several days into his first week, everything O'Leary had been teaching him was put to the test when the HPD requested an AMBER Alert. The call came in during the weekend, when O'Leary and

“When I first got into this work, my husband teased me, saying, ‘You always take care of the little things – kids and animals.’ I replied, ‘Well, if one of our children ever went missing, I’d want everybody in the world out there looking for them. Why shouldn’t I be one of those people?’ ”

Denise O'Leary  
Texas Center for the Missing

Continued on next page

# FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT



Denise O'Leary is shown during mounted patrol duty for the Harris County Sheriff's Office. Photo: Facebook

Benefield were out of the office. "I reached Steve by phone, and since we both had our work laptops with us, I talked him through the process. He did great."

"Thankfully, I had a good co-pilot," Benefield quipped.

"And thankfully we had a good outcome on the case," O'Leary noted, providing some background:

On August 21, 2022, the HPD was contacted by the parents of a 3-year-old girl who, after waking up at 5 a.m., found their daughter missing – and the front door ajar.

The HPD responded to the scene and began canvassing the family's apartment complex in North Houston. Fortunately, a neighbor

reported seeing the girl being placed in a vehicle that he could provide a good description of, along with its driver.

An AMBER Alert was issued, and within hours, the HPD had tracked the suspected abductor to a motel less than two miles from the girl's home. After confirming with a manager that the man in question had checked in earlier that day, officers were able to access the room, safely recover the child, and arrest a 50-year-old man for kidnapping her.

"Neither the girl nor her parents had ever met the man," O'Leary said.

The positive outcome "is a textbook case of why the public's involvement is vital, and why public education is so important," she added.

Community education is central to the TCM's work. Currently they are partnering with Houston Public Media, which is helping them produce short public service announcements. "We've created an awesome pamphlet to help the public understand how AMBER Alerts work," O'Leary said. "We don't want people to get annoyed and turn off their phone's alert notification function. We need them to be our eyes and ears."

O'Leary and Benefield also discussed what has fueled them along their career paths.

"While working HPD cases involving juvenile abuse, I began to see just how many kids grow up in difficult conditions," Benefield said. "To see a child intentionally burned by his or her caregiver, then going with the child to the hospital and staying by his side – before going home to my own two children – was tough. I realized that if somebody from law enforcement wasn't

there to help them, who would?" O'Leary can relate. "As the mother of two teens, I'm willing to do whatever it takes to help families find their missing children."

The TCM is one of two nonprofit organizations in Texas that help families and law enforcement search for missing children. The other is the AMBER Alert Network-Brazos Valley led by Chuck Fleeger, who also serves as TxDPS Region 3 Coordinator.

"Denise has a unique skill set," Fleeger said. "She joined the TCM after years

of experience working missing persons investigations for the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), particularly long-term missing cases." O'Leary worked for the HCSO for 12 years before ultimately working as a reserve captain. "She has always made herself available to anyone who needs her. Her dedication is remarkable."

O'Leary said she won't be riding off into the sunset entirely. She will continue her HCSO missing persons work as time allows. "You can't completely leave this line of work," O'Leary says. "It becomes a part of you."

## 'One-Stop Support Shop' for Families of the Missing

The Texas Center for the Missing (TCM) is nationally recognized for its Missing in Harris County Day, a free public event held each spring. (The next will be April 29, 2023.)

"Basically, it's a one-stop support shop for families of the missing," O'Leary said. "We have representatives from the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), the medical examiner's office, all regional law enforcement agencies and representatives from other resources who are available to talk with anyone who has a missing family member or friend.

Families can file a report if they haven't already, and NamUs can take samples of their DNA to include in its national database.

"The medical examiner also has booklets of photos showing unidentified remains that people can review. They're not easy to look at, but if you're a parent searching for a loved one, they can be a big help."

Concerned families are encouraged to bring their missing child's skeletal X-rays, dental records, or other identifying records, and have two biological relatives attend to provide DNA samples.

"We've had a number of cases solved because of the event," O'Leary said. "It makes a difference."

*For more details visit [centerforthemissing.org/missing-in-harris-county-day/](https://centerforthemissing.org/missing-in-harris-county-day/).*

# AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## California considers 'Feather Alert' for indigenous missing

A California lawmaker is proposing a "Feather Alert" that would notify the public when indigenous people go missing under certain circumstances. Assembly member James C. Ramos said the alert would be activated through California's AMBER Alert system and would be similar to the state's Endangered Missing Advisory.

"This bill brings further attention and effort to end violence on tribal lands and across the state," Ramos said.

The bill is co-sponsored by the Yurok, California's largest tribe, in Northern California. On July 1, 2022, a bill in Washington State created the first statewide emergency alert system for missing indigenous people. Similarly, Colorado passed a bill in June that

created the Office of Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, tasked with creating an indigenous alert system.

"It is a top priority for us to make change and not just talk about it; this creates action through legislation," Yurok Tribal Chairman Joe James told *The Press Democrat*.

According to the Sovereign Bodies Institute and Yurok Tribal Court, Northern California has 107 missing and murdered indigenous women. In 2016, the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) tracked more than 5,700 missing indigenous women and girls – but according to the Urban Indian Health Institute, only 116 were reported in U.S. Department of Justice statistics.



## Canadian indigenous organization issues first alert for missing woman and son

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) issued a missing person alert after an indigenous woman and her 7-year-old son went missing July 24, 2022, in Saskatchewan, Canada. Both were found in Oregon August 5. Dawn Walker is now facing charges of parental abduction and public mischief.

Several First Nation women, however, say Walker was fleeing from domestic violence. "Until you walk the mile in the shoes of women who have to protect their children or themselves, you have no room to talk," said Mary Culbertson, Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan. The FSIN declined to comment.



## Canada public safety minister addresses AMBER Alerts for tribal members

Canadian Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino said more dialogue is needed to find out if enough is being done when a First Nation member goes missing.

Tribal leaders have been critical after AMBER Alerts were not issued in two cases involving indigenous children. "At a minimum, there should be dialogue about whether the criteria

[for AMBER Alerts] are providing as much support as is needed in those very early and fragile moments, when every minute can make a difference," he said.

Mendicino has been meeting with indigenous political and law enforcement leaders about efforts to protect First Nation members.



# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## New UK website to help families of missing persons

Families in the United Kingdom have a new resource to help them deal with all the issues they need to face when a family member goes missing. The **Missing Persons Information Hub** provides information and organizations that can help families with a missing loved one. Missing persons expert Charlie Hedges created the website and has received support from AMBER Alert Europe, the Alzheimer's Society, several universities, and other missing person organizations. Hedges said he wanted to offer something simple for families in crisis. Though he has been dedicated to missing persons work for more than 25 years, "due to its complexities, I still find it hard to find what I am looking for," he explained.



## Nigeria using Facebook to deter child trafficking

Nigeria is now using the social media reach of Facebook to curb online child trafficking and the buying and selling of children. The African country is working with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) to utilize Facebook for protecting children, including posting AMBER Alerts. "Over 40 percent of victims are now recruited online, and this has raised concerns considering the impact of the social media on our children," said Amarachi Kene-Okafor with the Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour.



## AMBER Alert Europe releases annual report

AMBER Alert Europe's **2021 Report** details efforts with the #ZeroMissingKids campaign during the past year. The organization is continuing plans to have a "Common European Approach on Missing Children and Missing Persons." The report notes that for the first time, all 27 European Union (EU) Member States agreed to the "Council Conclusions on Stepping Up Cross-Border Police Cooperation in the Area of Missing Persons."



## Bahamas issues first 'Marco Alert' for missing child

The Bahamas initiated its first "Marco Alert" for a missing 17-year-old girl in July 2022. Marco is an acronym for Mandatory Action Rescuing Children in Operation. Bahamian officials said some mistakes were made while issuing the alert and a review will be done to improve future efforts to find missing children.



# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS



## MARYLAND STARTS 'EMMETT TILL ALERT' FOR HATE CRIMES

Maryland leaders will now be notified of hate crimes with an “Emmett Till Alert.” The alert is named after the 14-year-old Black boy who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 for allegedly whistling at a White woman. Pictures of Till’s open casket helped transform the nation’s civil rights movement. Currently, the new alert will notify 167 key civil rights and community leaders of any racial incident or hate crime. The alerts have three levels: low, medium, and high. The highest level means there is a high possibility of violence or death.



## CALIFORNIA SALUTES 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

Since launching its AMBER Alert system in July 2002, California has helped return 376 missing or abducted children to their families. The state issued its first alert a month after its inception and rescued two teen girls from a suspect who later died in a gun battle. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) recognized the 20th anniversary of the child abduction alerts at a press event. “We are so successful because we are all caretakers in our community,” said CHP Commissioner Amanda Ray.



## MORE STATES USING ALERTS FOR HIT-AND-RUN DRIVERS

Starting in January 2023, California will begin issuing Yellow Alerts to notify the public and help law enforcement find hit-and-run drivers. If police have a complete or partial license plate number and description of the vehicle, the information can be flashed on highway message signs in the area and sent to the media. Colorado and Maryland already use similar alerts for hit-and-run crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports a 26 percent increase in hit-and-run fatalities – from 2,037 in 2019 to 2,564 in 2020.



## U.S. HOUSE APPROVES ACTIVE SHOOTER ALERT SYSTEM

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill in July to establish an AMBER Alert-style system to warn the public about active shooter incidents. The bill’s supporters hope the alerts will protect the public during mass shootings. The bill now needs approval from the U.S. Senate.

# TRAINING SPOTLIGHT: Teamwork in Action

NCJTC Associate Tony Rodarte reflects on the power of Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs) and teaching a well-received CART class in Klamath Falls, Oregon

By Jon Leiberman

***“Holy cow, we need more hands on deck immediately.”***

Tony Rodarte realized this while working child abduction cases early in his 20-year tenure with the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Department (MCSO) in Arizona.

“A child abduction response is a low-frequency event, but when they happen, there is a lot of stress,” Rodarte says. And compounding that stress? “We weren’t training regularly for such cases; we weren’t keeping up with best-practices; we weren’t coordinated,” he recalls. “Ultimately we created a team in conjunction with the state.”

Rodarte has been an active and instrumental member of Arizona’s statewide Child Abduction Response Team (CART) since its inception in 2011. The MCSO served as a host agency with the AZCART, and Rodarte served as the team’s co-coordinator in 2016.

Two years later, Rodarte retired from the MCSO, having spent the last 11 years there working in the homicide division. But post-retirement, his eagerness to continue refining the CART process – by sharing his experiences and lessons learned during his career – led him to become a subject matter expert for the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) and AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP).

Klamath Falls, Oregon is a city of about 20,000 people and the gateway to Crater Lake National Park. It also was the site of a



Participants of the Klamath Falls, Oregon, Child Abduction Response Team (CART) training session stand in unison with their CART course instructor, NCJTC Associate Tony Rodarte (front row, far right).

“ I firmly believe we are better together. A single child abduction response can cripple a small agency quickly. But if we can equip and prepare them with the necessary training and resources, then we are a step ahead. ”

Tony Rodarte, NCJTC Associate/  
AATTAP CART instructor

recent AATTAP CART training, during which Rodarte provided instruction alongside other NCJTC Associates committed to improving responses to cases involving endangered missing and abducted children.

“It was a great group in Oregon, and what made it great was the diversity,” Rodarte says. “There was a mix of sworn officers, search and rescue personnel, civilians and others – all of them engaged and vigorously taking notes.”

Continued on next page

The course Rodarte taught focuses on the most vital elements of a CART response, including activation and deployment; establishing incident command and field considerations for mobile command operations; search and canvass operations; volunteer management; and other physical and personnel resources that can improve the overall response to endangered missing and abducted child incidents.

***“At night, during an active child abduction, is not the time to learn. Now is the time to learn.”***

Rodarte emphasized this best-practice principle and others while working with class attendees.

Julie Harper with the Klamath County Community Corrections Department had great things to say about the legal issues module. Rodarte “is an excellent speaker and kept my attention throughout his presentation,” she said after the class. “I liked that he brought some humor into the discussion, since it’s such a serious topic.”

A key objective of AATTAP’s CART training is to encourage collaboration among agencies and resource providers within jurisdictions, so that when missing children cases happen, there is a team approach.

“Everything that was taught will help me improve our response to missing children,” said Ryan Kaber of the Klamath County Sheriff’s Office.

Another key component of the training involves tabletop exercises that give participants from different agencies – and who have different roles within their law enforcement and public safety work – to think through elements of response and decision-making together.

“I enjoyed being able to work with others from different agencies to come up with answers and see what we did right and wrong,” said Craig Delarm of the Lake County Search and Rescue Department.

Course participants walked away with actionable ways to begin making a difference in their communities – and partnering with neighboring law enforcement agencies. “We hope to partner with the Klamath County Sheriff’s Office to create a team,” said Kami Wilton of the Klamath County Community Corrections Division.

Hearing such positive feedback left Rodarte energized and encouraged.

***“I hope they never have to use the information – but if they do, they will be ready.”***

“In a perfect world, we all hope to never need a CART response,” Rodarte says. “But the world we live in means such investigations will take place. So we have to be ready. And readiness involves participants not only retaining the fundamentals, but also building on that readiness when returning to their agencies.”

Klamath County Sheriff Chris Kaber spoke directly to just the sort of readiness Rodarte hopes to impart. “The information we obtained in this valuable training has better prepared us for responding in the initial hours of a missing child investigation,” he said. “We’ve already used some of the techniques we learned at this training in other high-profile investigations. The benefit was almost immediate.”

*Learn more about the AATTAP’s CART training, and find an array of CART resources, at [amberadvocate.org/cartresources](http://amberadvocate.org/cartresources).*

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