

# THE AMBER ADVOCATE

FALL/WINTER 2012

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**AMBER ALERT SCAMS**



**IN MEMORIAM**



**Hugh Emerson Munn**  
1942 - 2012



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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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# BAD INTENTIONS:

## HOW THE AMBER ALERT IS BEING USED TO SCAM PEOPLE

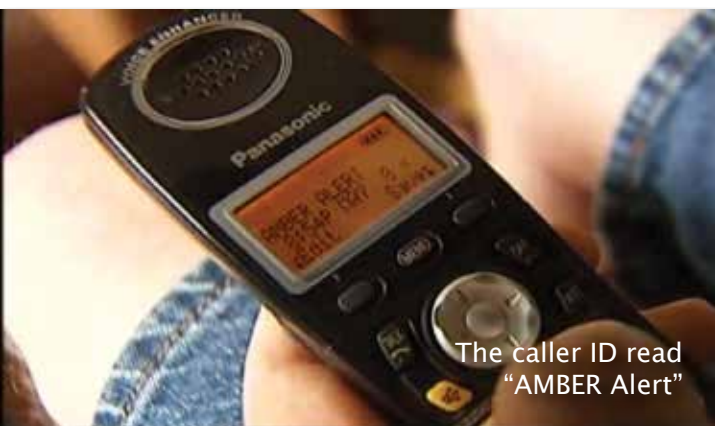
In Buckeye Lake, OH, the phone rang at the home of Terry and Laurence Noblick. Laurence picked up the phone after reading “AMBER Alert” on the caller ID. He was surprised when the person on the other end of the line said he was collecting money for the AMBER Alert Plan.

“That is rather strange to get an AMBER Alert phone call and a gentleman asking for money,” Laurence told a local reporter.

The call was even stranger because the Ohio AMBER Alert Plan does not solicit donations. Ohio Department of Public Safety Captain Rob Jackson is the Ohio AMBER Alert Coordinator, and he thinks the call is the newest twist on an old scam.

“There have been scams around for years where telephone solicitors tried to collect money and claimed association with police departments or fire departments, so it did not surprise me the scam artists would try and capitalize on AMBER Alert,” said Jackson. “It seems nothing is out of bounds for these types of scam artists.”

Some schemes take the plan designed to protect children and use it to put children in danger. Last April in Las Vegas, NV, a man showed up at the door of Annette Rosada and asked for a picture and personal information about her 7-year-old son.

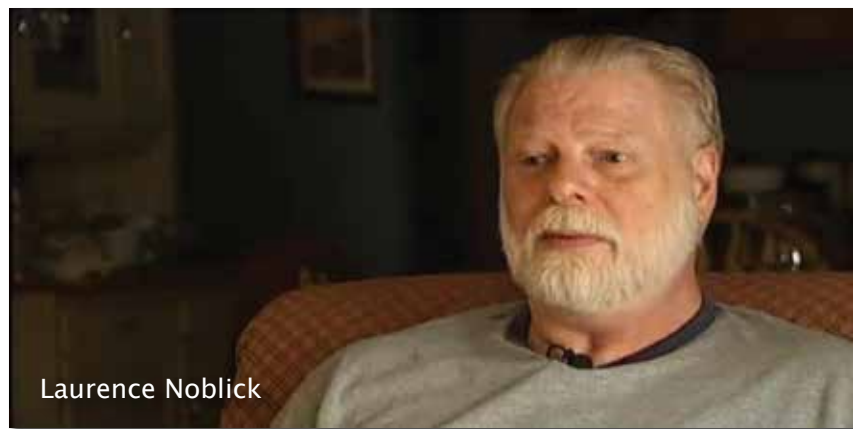


The caller ID read “AMBER Alert”

The man said he was with “AMBER Alert Protection Services” and claimed the mother requested to have her son fingerprinted. He said the information was

needed in case her son ever disappeared. Rosada refused the request, but the man said he would return the next day and then left with two other people.

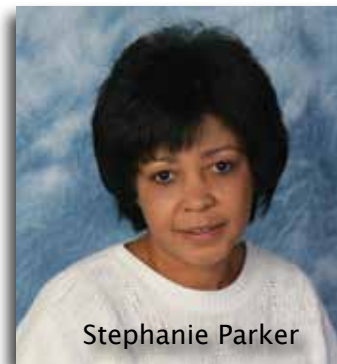
“That night, all kinds of things went through my head,” Rosada told a reporter. “We do not know why they want all this information. It could be to sell the information. It could be anything. That drives me crazy.”



Laurence Noblick

The Las Vegas police were contacted and began searching for a car with an Oklahoma license plate.

Nevada AMBER Alert Coordinator Stephanie Parker was appalled when she heard someone was using the AMBER Alert to gather personal information about children. She thinks there are many reasons these people tried to obtain this information, and the people may have also been casing homes for a robbery.



Stephanie Parker

“I think it is scary,” said Parker. “I think it is alarming and people need to report any type of suspicious activity like this. If you did not ask someone to come to your house, then something is wrong, and people need to contact the authorities.”

What happened in Las Vegas also happened in Patton Township, PA. In August, a woman claiming she worked for “AMBER Alert” approached several people in the same neighborhood, saying she needed DNA from hair samples and pictures of their children “in case of an emergency.”

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

In October, a woman was knocking on doors in Franklin City, KY, claiming she was with the “AMBER Alert System.” The woman was actually attempting to sell insurance and child identification kits and told one mother, “I heard you had a newborn in your house.” The mother refused to let the woman come in to get more information about the child.

The silver lining to these scams is that AMBER Alert coordinators are using them to educate the public. “Immediately seize upon the opportunity to get a news release out and use it as another chance to educate the public about your program and what they can expect to see during a real AMBER Alert,” advised

Jackson. “The more public awareness of the branding of your programs, the better off you are in fending off these types of attacks from scammers.”

Jackson said the Ohio media got the word out quickly about the scam and the reports brought an end to the phone calls.

“I think AMBER Alert coordinators should on a regular basis educate their communities what AMBER Alert actually is—that it is a tool for law enforcement—not businesses,” added Parker.

The Nevada AMBER Alert Coordinator has also gone after legitimate businesses that use the AMBER Alert to market and seek customers. “We had companies claiming to be part of the AMBER Alert Program,” said Parker. “They would take addresses and visit homes. It is important for them to understand the harm in providing misleading information.”

She said AMBER Alert coordinators need to be vigilant to find out what is being said about the AMBER Alert and who is claiming to be associated with the AMBER Alert Program. “The AMBER Alert is a tool, it is not a product,” said Parker. ☺



Use the opportunity to educate the public about your AMBER Alert program.

## HUGH MUNN REMEMBERED AS AMBER ALERT PIONEER



Hugh Munn, who passed away on October 19 in Columbia, SC, is remembered for his bridge-building efforts that improved the AMBER Alert Program. Munn developed innovative ways to provide AMBER Alert training to thousands of broadcasters

and law enforcement officers at the University of South Carolina School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

“A pioneer in bridging the gap between law enforcement and the media, Hugh understood the perspectives of both, but insisted both must focus on children. Hugh made an incredible impact and left a lasting legacy for others to follow in his footsteps of protecting children,” said Phil Keith, AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program Director.

Munn was a longtime journalist when he became the first public information officer for the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division in 1979. He served in that capacity for 26 years before going to the University of South Carolina. Munn was 70 years old and is survived by his wife and two daughters. ☺

# PROFILE: THERESA SHANLEY LISTENED TO HER HEART TO HELP SAVE AN ABDUCTED GIRL

It was a foggy afternoon in San Francisco, and Theresa Shanley was walking with her 7-year-old daughter Mary through a grocery store parking lot when she saw a panhandler with a young girl shivering in the cold. She thought to herself that something just was not right.



Theresa Shanley

She said her “mother’s sense” and the hair on her arms supported her suspicions that the girl was someone she had seen in an AMBER Alert. Shanley tried to find her cell phone but couldn’t; she ran into the store to ask a clerk if she could call 911. She thought the worst that could happen is the police would arrive and tell the pair to move on.

“She has the same brown eyes as the girl missing from Virginia,” Shanley told the dispatcher. “Her mother was murdered. I am not a nut, and I do not call you guys all the time. Can you come ID her and see if she should be with that man?”

Shanley was working as a nurse at the San Francisco jail when she saw Nancy Grace on CNN talking about a 12-year-old girl who had been abducted in Virginia after her mother was killed.

“I stopped and focused on the girl’s brown eyes,” said Shanley. She said she recognized those same eyes in the parking lot and saw a lot of pain. The dispatcher asked Shanley to wait until police arrived.

“I was shocked when the officer came over and said, ‘You are right Ms. Shanley. It was her.’”

The girl in the parking lot was 12-year-old Brittany Smith. Her mother, Tina Smith, was found at her home in Roanoke, VA, on December 5, 2010. She had been beaten to death with a baseball bat. Police suspected that houseguest Jeff Easley killed her and took off

with her young daughter. Chuck Mason is the acting Assistant Chief of the Roanoke County Police Department. He was the lieutenant in charge of detectives at the time of the murder investigation and was involved in requesting an AMBER Alert.



Chuck Mason

“We were striking out. We had no idea where the suspect had gone,” said Mason. “We had to expand beyond law enforcement and needed the public’s help.”

The national media picked up on the AMBER Alert on the first day and journalists continued filing updated reports about the search each day. One week after the murder, Mason got a call from the police in San Francisco.

“I would like to say the case was solved by good police work but it was really the media coverage and one woman being observant and remembering the face of the girl,” said Mason. “We may not have found the girl and certainly not as fast as we did. We may have had another body in California.”

Easley pleaded guilty to capitol murder and on February 29, 2012, he was ordered to spend the rest of his life in prison. Brittany Smith is living with her father and now considers Shanley and her daughter as part of her family. They all went on a beach vacation together in August.

The Department of Justice recognized Shanley as the AMBER Alert Citizen of the Year. However, she does not consider herself a hero. “I was just doing what anyone should do,” said Shanley. “Law enforcement cannot do it all. We will see more than they will ever see. Listen to your inner voice, and remember it will not do any good unless you make the call. Take that extra moment to make sure a child is ok.”

“We just have to look after the kids,” concluded Shanley. “There are too many kids missing.”

# ON THE FRONT LINES

## TRICK OR TREATERS HELP SOLVE HALLOWEEN AMBER ALERT

Two cars filled with trick-or-treating youngsters helped end a frightening night for two children abducted by their neighbor on Halloween in 2011. The Shasta County (CA) Sheriff's Office initiated an AMBER Alert for April Swartz after she took 7-year-old Michael Sandoval and his 5-year-old sister Mya fishing and never brought them home.

Shasta County Sheriff Lt. John Hubbard said they did not know the children were in danger until they interviewed the neighbors. "We learned she was smoking meth and driving with the children, and then we knew they were in imminent danger," said Hubbard. "Once we determined the criteria were met and made the decision the AMBER Alert went out quickly. It worked like clockwork."



said she turned off her lights and parked her SUV and then tried to hide it with a camouflage blanket.

But the information from the citizens helped law enforcement narrow down the suspect's location, and a highway patrol helicopter eventually spotted the vehicle. Less than 5 hours after the alert was activated, the suspect was arrested and both children were found safe.

"It was a perfect example of what the AMBER Alert was made for,"

said Hubbard. "The system works if you follow the guidelines and do not abuse it." He said his biggest lesson learned is how important it is to quickly start investigating all missing children cases.

Ferrero said the officers and sergeants at the Emergency Notification and Tactical Alert Center deserve credit for bringing the children home safely because they activated the alert so quickly. Still, he was glad he was prepared. "I made sure I was proficient in the law and policies to ensure I was providing correct answers," he said. "I found none of the cases are black and white. They are all different." As a precaution, Ferrero always keeps a reference card in his wallet with the AMBER Alert criteria and protocol.

The motorists were modest when reporters asked them about their response. "I just did what anybody else would have done," said Nelson. "It is a great feeling," added Lovett. "You feel like you have a responsibility for all children. It could have been my kids." ☺

This was the first AMBER Alert for Hubbard and one of the first for California Highway Patrol Captain Greg Ferrero, who became the state's AMBER Alert Coordinator in October. "I got a call when I was on my way to a Halloween parade," he said. "The coordination between the sheriff's office and our office was right on target. We determined the criteria were met and had the alert out in a very short time."

Deann Nelson was driving with her nephew who was in a zombie costume when she heard the AMBER Alert on the radio and spotted the suspect's SUV. Razi Lovett was driving with his children who were dressed as Captain America, a cat, and a tiger when he saw the vehicle from the alert posted on a freeway sign.

Both motorists called 911 and followed the suspect without telling their trick-or-treaters what was going on. Deputies learned later that Swartz also saw the AMBER Alert and noticed cars were following her. She



Shasta County Sheriff Lt. John Hubbard



California Highway Patrol Captain Greg Ferrero

# TRAINING

## AMBER ALERT ACADEMIES BRING TRAINING TO YOUR TOWN

Mike Adair had a problem the size of Texas. The chief investigator for the Tarrant County (TX) Criminal District Attorney's Office provides training for missing and abducted child investigations in North Texas. Like many states, the turnover of law enforcement officers in Texas was increasing at the same time training and travel budgets were decreasing.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, solved Adair's problem through the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance (AAT&TA) Program to bring training directly to law enforcement academies in Texas.

"We have 6 counties, 42 agencies, and 150 investigators involved in the program and no one is more than 30 to 40 miles from the training," said Adair. "With the economic situation, it would be impossible to send that many people away for a 3-day training."



Mike Adair

So far, Adair has set up three academies in North Texas, and officers seeking the training helped design the courses. Some of the training covered child abduction investigations, cross border investigations, DNA evidence, human trafficking, and using computers and the Internet to investigate missing and exploited children.

"In all the training I have seen in 42 years, I have never seen so many positive evaluations than I have seen with the academies," said Adair. "By training all of the officers together, when an emergency call goes out, we will all be on the same page."

He said the training paid off when a small police agency called in the Child Abduction Response Team to help resolve a child kidnapping. Now more agencies are approaching Adair to get involved with the academies. "All the chiefs and sheriffs have seen the

advantage of having us all train together," he said. "It's been a win-win for everybody."

In 2011, the AAT&TA Program trained 627 people at 10 law enforcement academies in 7 states. In 2012, 1,021 people were trained at 17 law enforcement academies in 10 states with 1 more academy in another state scheduled for the remainder of the year.

The AAT&TA Program will continue to offer regional courses, but more law enforcement agencies are expected to bring the customized training offered to their academies.

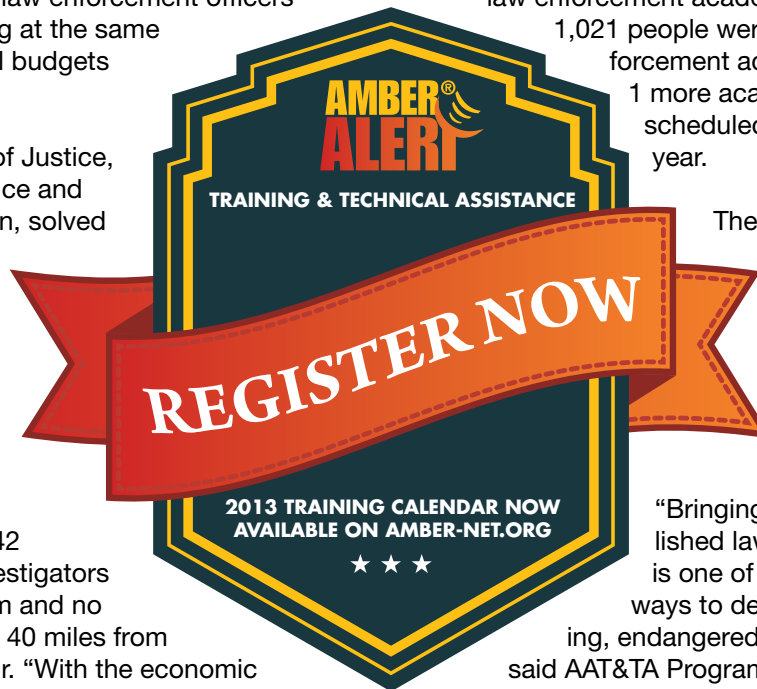
"Bringing the courses to an established law enforcement academy is one of the most economical ways to deliver training on missing, endangered, and abducted children," said AAT&TA Program Director Phil Keith. "This method of delivery institutionalizes the need to protect America's children."

Tennessee Missing Children Clearinghouse Manager Amy Allen is also a big believer in academies. In 2011, Tennessee offered a 3.5-day academy session and a 3-day academy session in 2012.

"The AAT&TA Program tailored the classes to what we needed," she said. "The officers did not realize that so many things occur in a missing child investigation. Some thought you just activate an AMBER Alert and go home. The courses show that you still need to conduct an investigation."

She said the officers really like having "fresh faces" come in, and the training has been exceptional. "I know the skills we have learned have been used over and over again," she said.

Many Tennessee officers now rely on the academies to help get their required 40 hours of training each year. Allen offers this advice to anyone considering an academy: "Do it. It is worth the time and effort. It is great for your state and personnel. They have all loved it and want us to bring it back." ☺



# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## DUTCH CAN NOW GET AMBER ALERTS FROM IPHONE APP



The Netherlands now uses an iPhone app to send AMBER Alerts. More than 1.2 million Dutch citizens already get the alerts automatically by e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and digital signs throughout the country. The FBI Child ID App, which provides automatic AMBER Alert notifications and allows parents to store pictures and a description of their own children, inspired the new app. ☺

## GREECE STARTS TEAM TO FIND ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Greece has brought police officers, firefighters, members of the Coast Guard, and volunteer organizations together to create a team to find missing and abducted children. The Coordination Operational Team for Missing Children will coordinate resources and equipment during missing and abducted child investigations. The team was launched May 25 and has already been activated to successfully find a 7-year-old girl. ☺





# AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## WORKSHOP ADDRESSES TRAFFICKING OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN & CHILDREN



SMU



MIWSAC

Minnesota Indian Women's  
Sexual Assault Coalition

Southern Methodist University held a week-long series of workshops in October on Native American issues that included a detailed look at the trafficking of women and children in Indian Country. The workshop in Dallas, TX, examined research by Christine Stark and Eileen Hudon of the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition on the history and societal factors contributing to the exploitation and trafficking of women and children in Indian Country.

Members of the AMBER in Indian Country team joined Stark and Hudon to discuss how victims from Native American communities are caught up in the world of prostitution and sexual exploitation. The series called "Native Peoples: Inherent Rights & Forgotten Voices" educates students and faculty members about Native Americans. ☺

## VOLUNTEERS & BLOODHOUNDS SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY IN INDIAN COUNTRY

A massive search effort was launched after a 3-year-old boy went missing from a ranch near Candy Kitchen, NM. Family members of Gabriel Marez searched for the missing toddler for 2 hours before calling in law enforcement for help at 3 p.m. on September 5.

State, county, city, and tribal law enforcement officers joined park service, fire, and transportation officials in the search that included ATVs and night goggles. The Laguna Police Department also brought in three dogs from the Search and Rescue K-9 unit to help find the missing boy.

A neighbor found the child at 11:30 p.m. about a mile from the boy's home. He had a few scratches and lost his diaper but was in good condition.

"I cannot explain my feeling when I saw the volunteer walk right up to the command post out of the dark with the child in his arms healthy and safe," said Laguna Police Detention Commander Billy Emanuel.

After he was found, Marez was taken to the Zuni Pueblo Hospital Clinic to make sure he was okay. ☺

Laguna Pueblo, near Candy Kitchen, NM



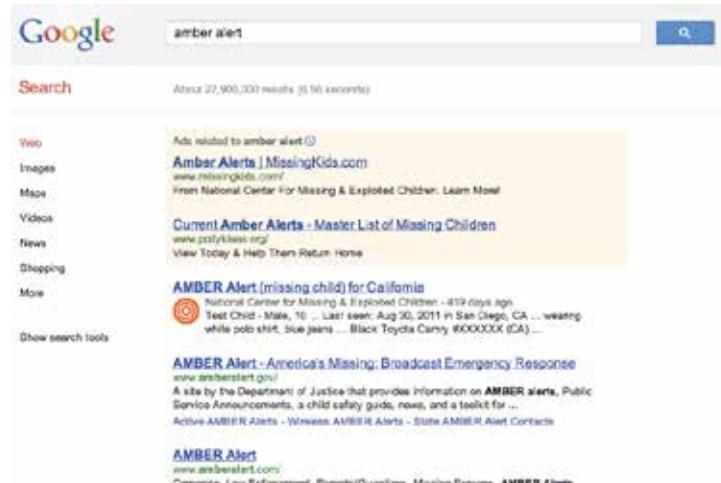
# ODDS & ENDS

## GOOGLE CREATES THE “MODERN MILK CARTON”

Google has partnered with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children to notify people of abducted children in their area. People using Google or Google Maps will receive AMBER Alerts if they are located in the area where a child has been abducted.

“Google takes the issue of child safety very seriously,” said Susan Molinari, Google Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs.

Google is already looking at ways to improve the system so people will be notified if they are within a mile of the incident. Google will expand the radius in time when new information comes in. The search engine also hopes to bring the alerts to Google users in Europe. ☺



## LICENSE PLATES MAY BE REDESIGNED TO HELP FIND MISSING CHILDREN

Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island are considering adding symbols to license plates to make it easier to identify cars—and find missing and abducted children. Magi Bish, the mother of 16-year-old Molly Bish, who was murdered in 2000, is championing the effort. Bish said she was unable to remember the license plate number of a suspicious car she saw near the pond where her daughter disappeared. “Molly’s Bill” would change the license plates to have five characters with a symbol, which advocates say can be easily identified—even by a 2-year-old child. ☺



## “HEART AND SOUL” OF NCMEC RETIRES

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Vice-President John Rabun announced he will retire after 28 years with the organization. Rabun oversaw the programs for missing child and sexual exploitation cases and helped write a book for health care professionals on how to respond to infant abductions. “John has been the heart and soul of NCMEC,” said former NCMEC President and CEO Ernie Allen.

In tribute to Rabun, Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell made the following remarks on the Senate floor: “A national movement on behalf of America’s most precious resource, our children, was launched because one social worker in Louisville, KY, saw that too many children were at risk and not enough was being done. If every family impacted by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s work could thank John Rabun personally, it might take another 28 years, and he would never get to retire. But on behalf of a grateful and safer America, I hope the recognition of this Senate and the thanks and friendship of this Senator will suffice instead. So thank you very much, John Rabun.” ☺



# SUCCESS STORIES

## AMBER ALERT IS SAVING LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

**OCTOBER 8,  
2011**

Authorities in Lecom, MO, issued an AMBER Alert for a 3-year-old boy after he was taken by his non-custodial father who was known to use drugs and had a history of violence. A customer at a convenience store recognized the abductor from the alert and notified police. A motorist also contacted authorities after seeing the suspect's vehicle leave the store parking lot. Officers arrested the suspect as he was leaving his vehicle and rescued the child.

**NOVEMBER 20,  
2011**

The Isabella County Sheriff's Department issued an AMBER Alert for a 4-year-old child abducted from Weidman, MI. The suspect allegedly killed his wife and then took their young son. Law enforcement spotted the vehicle that matched the information from the AMBER Alert and safely rescued the child.

**NOVEMBER 22,  
2011**

Authorities in Rochester, NY, issued an AMBER Alert for a 3-year-old boy and his 1-year-old brother. The children were abducted by their mother's boyfriend after a physical altercation with the woman. A citizen saw the AMBER Alert and told authorities where to find the suspect's vehicle. The suspect had fled, but police found the children in a home near the vehicle.

**DECEMBER 19,  
2011**

An AMBER Alert was issued for a very sick 1-year-old girl abducted from Houston, TX. The child's father had a history of violence and had a restraining order against him, but he grabbed the child from a restaurant and took off. The abductor saw the alert and made arrangements with his lawyer to safely surrender the girl.

**OCTOBER 11,  
2012**

A 3-year-old Niles, OH, boy was left sleeping in a car while his father went inside a house to pick up another child. When the father returned a couple of minutes later, he saw someone driving away in the vehicle with the boy still inside. An off-duty police officer heard the AMBER Alert and searched for the vehicle. He located the car, the child was safely rescued, and the suspect surrendered without incident.

**OCTOBER 16,  
2012**

A 2-year-old girl was left in a car by her caregiver in Lithonia, GA. When the caregiver returned, she found the vehicle had been stolen with the child inside. An AMBER Alert was issued. Later, after hearing the AMBER Alert, a citizen recognized the vehicle in a parking lot and discovered the child was inside the vehicle alone. Law enforcement was notified, and the child was safely rescued.

# SUCCESS STORIES

**OCTOBER 24,  
2012**

An AMBER Alert was issued in Poplar Bluff, MO, when a registered sex offender abducted a 5-year-old girl from her yard. The girl's mother noticed the child was missing and saw the vehicle driving away. The abductor became aware of the AMBER Alert and contacted law enforcement to turn himself in and surrender the child. The child was safely rescued.

**OCTOBER 30,  
2012**

A 6-year-old boy was abducted in Barrio Oberero, Puerto Rico, when 4 armed men in black ski masks confronted the child and his father. The men took the child and fled. Later, the men dropped the boy off at a shopping center, where a guard recognized the child from the AMBER Alert broadcast. The guard contacted law enforcement, and the child was safely rescued. ☺

## GET THE MOST OUT OF THE AMBER ALERT FACEBOOK PAGE

The URL: plug **THIS** into your browser and click "LIKE"

The screenshot shows the Facebook page for AMBER Alert. The page header features the 'AMBER ALERT' logo in large yellow and red letters. Below the header, there is a 'Like' button and a '91,413' likes count. The page is divided into sections: 'About', 'Photos', 'Likes', 'AMBER Pages', and 'Newsletter'. Three callout boxes with arrows point to specific features: 'Timeline' points to the news feed, 'Newsletter' points to the 'Newsletter' link in the bottom right, and 'AMBER Pages' points to the 'AMBER Pages' link in the bottom right.

**Timeline:**  
Read recent AMBER Alert news here. You will always be up-to-date on what's going on with AMBER Alert around the world.

**Newsletter:**  
Read and download current and back issues of the AMBER Advocate.

**AMBER Pages:**  
Find and "LIKE" your state's AMBER Alert page to receive alerts on your wall when an AMBER Alert is issued.

[amber-net.org](http://amber-net.org) | [askamber@fvtc.edu](mailto:askamber@fvtc.edu)

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