

The AMBER Advocate

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America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response

Cheers and tears mark 2007 National Missing Children's Day Ceremony

U.S. Attorney General joins victims to honor AMBER Alert heroes

Though she is young, Tamara Brooks took the stage with the poise of a seasoned politician. The California college student was in Washington D.C. for the 2007 National Missing Children's Day ceremony. Five years earlier, she and a high school friend learned firsthand what it was like to be missing—both were kidnapped at gunpoint.

"Emotions were laced with terror as the reality of death went through our minds," she said. "We were not ready to die. Instead of giving up, we fought back with the same courage and strength embodying all those who tirelessly dedicate their lives to the eradication and prevention of missing children."

Child abduction victims and family members shared the stage with Attorney General Alberto Gonzales as he honored people who have dedicated their lives to recovering missing children. "Your work truly is God's work. Every faith I know of holds childhood to be precious, and regards attacks on innocence to be evil. Thank you for being there when our kids are hurting."

Few celebrations have so many tears. Nearly everyone in the audience wiped their eyes after watching the video that accompanies a new guide called "What About Me? Coping with the Abduction of a Brother or Sister." (More on



Regina B. Schofield (left) National AMBER Alert Coordinator, Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs and Tamara Brooks, abduction survivor

"What About Me?" on page 6)

"Words pay no debts." National AMBER Alert Coordinator Regina B. Schofield said quoting Shakespeare to express her gratitude to the people who have made out-

standing contributions to the AMBER Alert program. "We owe these people our gratitude. In one way or another these people have performed a great service on behalf of our nation's children," she added.

Acting Associate Attorney General William Mercer also helped hand out a total of 17 awards made to a broadcaster, an AMBER Alert coordinator, a clearinghouse coordinator, law enforcement officers and ordinary citizens who did extraordinary things for missing children (More pictures and stories on page 2). "We're proud of the work we're doing but the foundation is people like you," said Mercer.

The honors were highlighted by a heartfelt thanks from Tamara Brooks on behalf of all victims. "These people are guardian angels who give hope to those who fall prey to those who take children. Without you these children wouldn't stand a chance. Without you I wouldn't be standing here to thank you." ☾



**Alberto Gonzales
United States
Attorney General**

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MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY FACT:

On May 17, 2007, the Department of Justice released proposed guidelines for the implementation of the Adam Walsh Act. The proposed guidelines describe when, how and how often sex offenders will register information like their e-mail and instant messaging addresses.

2007 Award winners



Attorney General's Special Commendation Award: Detective Christopher Armstrong, Sgt. Misty Cedrun and Special Agent Aaron Meeks with the San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force for identifying and arresting a 54-year-old respiratory therapist who admitted to molesting children in the convalescent ward of a hospital.



AMBER Alert Courage Award: Clay Moore for his courage after being abducted at gunpoint at a school bus stop, and then gagged and bound with duct tape to a tree in a secluded area. He broke free with a safety pin and eventually helped investigators identify his abductor.



Law Enforcement Award: Lubbock County Sheriff David Gutierrez and Captain Antonio Menchaca for their perseverance in retrieving the remains of Joanna Rogers from a landfill, a 16-year-old girl who was savagely slain and discarded in a dumpster.



AMBER Alert Coordinator Award: Paul Murphy with the Utah Attorney General's Office for being the driving force behind the state's child abduction response plan and developing the Endangered Person Advisory for missing people who do not qualify for an AMBER Alert.

Tamara Brooks on behalf of all victims: "These people are guardian angels who give hope to those who fall prey to those who take children. Without you these children wouldn't stand a chance. Without you I wouldn't be standing here to thank you."



AMBER Alert Citizen Award: The McArdle family of Asheville, North Carolina for noticing AMBER Alert signs while returning from a trip to Florida and helping deputies rescue two kidnap victims, a 16-year-old mother and her two-year-old son.



National Missing Children's Day Art Contest Winner: The poster created by Elyria, Ohio, fifth grader Rachel Stevenson was selected from hundreds of entries to be displayed at the Department of Justice ceremony. Her art will be featured in missing children-related publications and at conferences throughout the year.

National Missing Children's Day



AMBER Alert Media Award: Nevada AMBER Alert Coordinator and State Broadcasting Assn. President Robert Fisher for developing Nevada's AMBER Alert plan and passionately promoting the cause of missing and abducted children with broadcasters throughout the country.



AMBER Alert Law Enforcement Award: Arlington, Texas Sgt. Mark Simpson was the original investigator on the Amber Hagerman homicide investigation and helped initiate the AMBER Alert Plan and raise awareness about abducted children throughout the country.



AMBER Alert Transportation Award: Todd Kramasz of the Minnesota Dept. of Transportation on his own initiative reactivated the AMBER Alert on highway signs during rush hour. A driver saw the signs and police were able to safely recover the kidnapped child.



Missing Children State Clearinghouse Coordinator Award: Wisconsin Clearinghouse Coordinator Susan Whitehorse for providing missing and exploited children training in tribal communities and starting the first conferences to tackle crimes against children in Indian Country.



Missing Child Non-Profit Organization Award: Missing Child Non-Profit Organization Award: Nevada Child Seekers Executive Director Stephanie Parker for providing case management, abduction prevention education and other services on behalf of missing and abducted children since 1985.

"Your work truly is God's work. Every faith I know of holds childhood to be precious, and regards attacks on innocence to be evil. Thank you for being there when our kids are hurting."
— Attorney General Alberto Gonzales

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Official AMBER FAQ's:
877-71-AMBER
askamber@fvtc.edu

Training & Class registration:
www.amber-net.org





Christopher L. Vasquez, Pinal County Sheriff

From the AMBER Alert frontlines:

“The AMBER Alert saved this child’s life”

The AMBER Alert in Maricopa, Arizona went out with very low expectations from law enforcement for a happy ending. On January 26, a young mother let a “friend of a friend” take her six-year-old daughter to school. The friend turned out to be a registered sex offender from Louisiana and her daughter never showed up at school.

“This had the makings of a catastrophic situation,” said Maricopa Police Chief Patrick Melvin. “When we found out about the suspect’s background, I was thinking ‘Oh no this is not going to be good.’”

The Maricopa Police Department was brand new and only had a few employees at the time. The Pinal County Sheriff’s Office handled the case and issued an AMBER Alert for a six-year old girl with blue eyes, shoulder-length strawberry-blonde hair, last seen wearing pink footie-style pajamas.

The suspect, 26-year-old George Richard Horner, heard the alert on the radio and abandoned the victim in the desert. The girl was able to walk out of the desert and into a nearby community. A woman recognized the six-year-old from the alert and called police a few hours after the notice went out.

“He was taking her out to the desert to kill her,” said Pinal County Sheriff Chris Vasquez about the suspect. “He got spooked by the AMBER Alert and thought he had to ditch her quick. He still thought she would die out there with the coyotes.”

“This is the closest call we’ve had of losing a child in the history of Arizona’s AMBER Alert Plan,” said Ari-

zona State AMBER Alert Coordinator Art Brooks. “The AMBER Alert saved this child’s life.”

The alert also put Arizona’s new operating system for AMBER Alerts to the test. Arizona, 11 other states and FEMA are part of a pilot project for an operating system that is designed to make it easier for law enforcement to send alerts and updates. “It’s faster, it’s more clear and it’s light years beyond what we had before,” added Brooks. “The AMBER Alert went out without a hitch.”

Chief Melvin is in agreement: “It worked. It worked. It worked.” Ditto from Sheriff Vasquez: “It went perfectly and played a huge role in recovering this child.”

The alert worked so well that the facts in the case will be used in an upcoming Arizona AMBER Alert training video. “The alert worked like clockwork,” said Officer Joe Delgado, AMBER Alert Training Coordinator for the Arizona Department of Public Safety. “Everyone worked together. It was one of our greatest successes.”

The suspect was eventually arrested after trying to hide in the desert. Horner was charged with two counts of sexual conduct with a minor, one count of kidnapping and one count of custodial interference of a sexual nature. The upcoming trial was cancelled after Horner committed suicide in jail. “He’s facing a higher authority,” said Sheriff Vasquez.

The biggest lesson learned by everyone involved, is that it is absolutely critical to quickly identify an AMBER Alert and get it out. To date, Arizona has issued 50 AMBER Alerts since the state’s child abduction plan was launched in September 2002. AMBER Alert Coordinator Art Brooks said he will never forget this one. “This one rocked my world.”



Arizona State AMBER Alert Coordinator Art Brooks: “The AMBER Alert saved this child’s life.”



Kidnapping suspect G. Richard Horner committed suicide in jail. “He’s facing a higher authority,” said Pinal County Sheriff Chris Vasquez.



Maricopa City Police Chief Patrick Melvin



Canadian corner

Manitoba blazes MOU trail for AMBER Alerts

A Canadian province and two U.S. states have effectively erased the border when it comes to AMBER Alerts. Manitoba signed an AMBER Alert Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Minnesota and North Dakota as a way to make sure children abducted in one area will still be found when they are taken to another.

"It's obviously better to have an agreement in place that ensures cooperation," said Keith McCaskill, Manitoba AMBER Alert Coordinator. "You want the alerts to go out as wide as possible to make sure the child is safe."

The MOU was signed by each attorney general in Manitoba, Minnesota and North Dakota. Everyone agreed to cooperate in these key areas:

- Have a single point of contact available 24 hours a day to issue alerts for another jurisdiction.
- Make sure AMBER Alert criteria are met and have a review committee to identify and correct problems.

- Educate law enforcement officers, broadcasters and the public.

Manitoba Attorney General Dave Chomiak is also working to get an MOU signed by other provinces. "The next step is to enhance our respective AMBER Alert strategies by committing to the development of a broader, inter-jurisdictional approach that will facilitate a timely and consistent response across provincial boundaries."

Minnesota AMBER Alert Coordinator Janell Rasmussen said other states and provinces should consider an MOU and offered this advice for anyone considering it. "I would recommend that you don't make it too specific. The most important thing is to recognize you have a working relationship." She added the MOU formalizes what everyone was willing to do in the first place but also challenges everyone to do more to strengthen each AMBER Alert plan.

The MOU was signed in 2006 and so far no one has had to issue an alert under the MOU. "We are ready," said McCaskill.



Keith McCaskill, Manitoba AMBER Alert Coordinator: "You want the alerts to go out as wide as possible to make sure the child is safe."

Personality profile: Illinois AMBER Alert Coordinator gives her all — and more — for missing children

When it comes to helping missing children, Cinda Lubich has nearly done it all. She's the Illinois AMBER Alert Coordinator, Missing Person Clearinghouse Director and the chair of I-SEARCH, the Inter-State Enforcement Agencies for the Recovery of Children, a network that includes representatives from 13 states.

This amounts to an enormous amount of work for Cinda because Illinois has approximately 40,000 children go missing each year — but her work doesn't end there. When parents or law enforcement officers call the toll-free missing children line after hours, Cinda takes the call.

Her voice cracked with emotion as she explained why she takes on so much. "It's the phone calls of appreciation from parents and police officers when a kid comes home — just knowing that I made a difference," she said.

Cinda said her work hits close to home because she is the mother of five children and grandmother of four. "I do it because I'm a parent and I think parents deserve help," she said.

In 2002, Cinda helped set up the Illinois AMBER Alert Plan—a difficult task since Illinois was only the fifth state to have a plan. "Like many states we learned the hard way," she said.

Initially, they planned to send the alerts over the EAS system but found out that only the Governor could use EAS. Then they tried to send the alerts through a mass fax but that did not work very well. Finally, they partnered with NOAA Weather Radio through the National Weather Service to contact broadcasters and are still using that method to this day.

The following year Cinda worked with Illinois legislators to pass a law that would enhance the state AMBER Alert Plan, including:

- A task force with representatives from 13 agencies that meets quarterly to monitor and review how the state AMBER Alert Plan is working.
- Community outreach through public service an-



Cinda Lubich, Illinois AMBER Alert Coordinator, Missing Person Clearinghouse Director and the chair of I-SEARCH: "I do it because I'm a parent and I think parents deserve help."



Cinda Lubich championed AMBER Alert billboards in Illinois like the one pictured above.

Continued on page 8.



New guide helps unrecognized victims of child abduction

When an AMBER Alert goes out everyone's focus is centered on the missing child. The victim's siblings are often forgotten. A new guide "What About Me? Coping With the Abduction of a Brother or Sister"

will help people remember the other victims of an abduction. The U.S. Department of Justice released the guide and accompanying video at the 2007 Missing Children's Day ceremony.

"We know it will hit the mark because it was written by kids who have already suffered this way," said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. "They know what it feels like. They know the emotions that well up. They know the questions that need to be answered."

The guide explains what to expect from law enforcement, the media, school and work and how to adapt to "A New Normal"—because nothing will ever be exactly the same again after a brother or sister is kidnapped. It also has a list of where to find more help, puzzles and places to write or draw.

A message is included from the brother and two sisters of kidnapping survivor Tamara Brooks. "What you feel is valid and important; please don't let anyone tell you otherwise," wrote Ericka, Marcus and Robin. "Remember these things: take care of yourself, find someone you can talk to. And remember you are not alone."

National AMBER Alert Coordinator Regina B. Schofield wrote the preface for the guide and offered the opening comments in the video. "I hope that you know that people care, that you'll have resources at your fingertips. We care that you'll be able to put back pieces of your life, knowing that one piece will always be missing."

Both the guide and the video rely on the words and emotions of siblings who lived through the abduction of a brother or sister. The interviews are touching and sometimes raw. Nearly everyone at the initial screening was moved to tears. Here is a sample of some of the comments:

"I think the most difficult part for me was I could see people feeling sorry for me, and I didn't want them to. It's very hard to have somebody look at you and not know what to say. Just try to be really strong." - Amy

"Even though the attention is focused on your brother or sister, you are still an individual, you have feelings and you have a right to feel those feelings. And that is okay.

You're not the only one who's feeling them, and there are people out there who will be willing to listen." - Erika

"You just have to wake up and realize you just have no choice but to be okay. You can't do anything else. At least that's how I kind of live my life. I don't have any other option but to be okay." - Carmen



Back: Marcus, Martha, Trevor, Amy and Robin. Front row: Ericka, Heather, and Carmen.

The guide and video were produced by the U.S. Department of Justice and are available through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. You can get more information and see the guide and video at <http://ojp.usdoj.gov/whatsnew/missingchildren.htm>.



Attendees at the National Missing Children's Day Ceremony watch the video "What About Me?"

AMBER ADVOCATE FEEDBACK

"I wish to congratulate the individuals responsible for contributing to the Second Edition of The AMBER Advocate. You have done an incredible job, not only does it look fantastic, the content is interesting and the format is great. Kudos to all involved for a job well done!"

Lois T. Hogan, Supervisor North Carolina Center for Missing Persons AMBER Alert Coordinator

"I was just forwarded a copy of your May 2007 AMBER Advocate newsletter. What a great publication. I am part of the AMBER team at our agency and would appreciate being included in receiving your newsletter. Thank you."

Linda Durand, Legal Assistant, Kansas Bureau of Investigation

AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

The AMBER Alert in Indian Country Initiative is working with Tribal communities to expand efforts to recover missing and abducted children. The Office of Justice Programs plans to accomplish two major tasks:

- Complete a needs assessment of selected Tribal pilot sites for an AMBER Alert plan.
- Provide technical support for implementing an AMBER Alert plan in the Tribal pilot sites.

For more information on Tribal initiatives:
www.tribaljusticeandsafety.gov.

Ham Radio & AMBER Alerts

Communication tool promotes public awareness in California

Some very old technology is the newest way to get the word out about AMBER Alerts. Ham radios are now being used for alerts in Orange County, California, along with all of the normal notifications like radio, TV and highway signs.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office uses RACES — Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service — volunteers to broadcast to all the "hams" roaming the freeways and city streets in Southern California. A two-meter RACES repeater is used to transmit the information at 15 minute intervals. An operator also stands by in case a ham radio operator spots a possible suspect.



RACES volunteer Tom Stroud broadcasts AMBER Alert using Amateur Radio.

"We feel that this is just one more way of having additional eyes looking for the abducted child," said Robert Stoffel, Communications Division

Director at the Orange County Sheriff's Department. "It would be easy for jurisdictions that have RACES programs to implement a similar program."

Here are the specifics on how Orange County uses RACES volunteers for AMBER Alerts:

- The RACES program coordinator receives an alert notification from the Sheriff's Office and activates RACES using the paging system. The message indicates an AMBER ALERT ACTIVATION with a contact frequency and phone number. Note: Activation is time sensitive and RACES is not used between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Available RACES members check-in on the frequency or telephone number provided on the page. A "Net Control" operator is selected and provides the AMBER Alert information.
- Net Control broadcasts the information on the RACES 2-Meter 146.895 repeater and uses the RACES Child Abduction Emergency broadcast form.
- The Net Control operator can operate from any location but should be in a place where a clear and strong signal can be heard from their transmissions. The operator can also choose to operate from the RACES Radio Room at the County Emergency Operations Center.

- The Net Control operator re-broadcasts the information every 15 minutes and every time a request is made by an Amateur Radio operator.
- The Net Control operator relays any information about a suspect sighting by telephone to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Net Control will not tell Amateur Radio operators to take any action unless specifically asked to do so by a law enforcement agency.
- The Net Control operator stands down from the alert after receiving notification by the Program Coordinator. The cancellation is done by reading the RACES Child Abduction Emergency Closing form.

"I would like to encourage other law enforcement agencies to incorporate amateur radio operators into their overall AMBER Alert response plan," added Stoffel. "Whatever need arises, trained RACES personnel are ready and prepared to help." ☾

— Original article written by Robert Stoffel, Communications Director, Orange County, California Sheriff's Department.

WHAT IS RACES?

Founded in 1952, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a public service provided by unpaid volunteer Amateur Radio operators during emergencies. Traditional RACES operations involve messages between critical locations such as hospitals and emergency shelters. These communications are handled in any mode available— although 2 meters FM is most common. RACES operators have also staffed emergency operations centers and helped with emergency equipment repair. RACES units develop and maintain their communications ability by training throughout the year with special exercises and public service events. The Orange County Sheriff's Department administers the RACES program in that county. For more information: www.ocraces.org.



OCRACES members pictured below, left to right: Lt. Ralph Sbragia, W6CSP, Sgt. Ernest Fierheller, KG6LXT, Bill Borg, KG6PEX, Lt. Joe Selikov, KB6EID, Placentia RACES President John McCauley, KD6PGC, and OCRACES Member Chuck Dolan, KG6UJC

Odds and ends:

Important information, resources and events

NATIONAL AMBER ALERT CONFERENCE

The 2007 National AMBER Alert Conference will be held November 13-16 in Denver, Colorado. The invitation-only event will provide specific courses for the following: AMBER Alert Coordinators, broadcasters and media representatives, law enforcement officers, Missing Children Clearinghouse Managers, Department of Transportation representatives, Native American community members and representatives on international and border issues.

PEOPLE MAGAZINE PROFILES AMBER ALERTS

Some of the most dramatic rescues involving AMBER Alerts were featured in a special article in the July 30, 2007, issue of *People* magazine. The six-page article detailed how the AMBER Alert plan started after the 1996 abduction and murder of Amber Hagerman and developed into a nationwide plan that is coordinated by the Department of Justice.

The article profiled five successful AMBER Alerts: a 13-year-old who was rescued after being stuffed in a car trunk; an 11-year-old who was saved after police shot out the tire of the abductor's truck; a 3-year-old and 5-year-old who were discovered alive in suitcases after police stormed a hotel room; an 11-year-old who was found after a trooper calculated the time for the abductor to travel from Minnesota to Utah; and two young brothers who were recovered after a citizen used a memory trick to remember the license plate in an AMBER Alert, 719 VMN became July 19--- Very Macho Name.

Personality profile, continued from page 5.

nouncements, billboards and even phone directories.

- Ongoing education for school children on how to protect themselves from abductors.
- Law enforcement instruction including videos, computer-based training and wallet information cards. Soon all 102 counties will have their own AMBER Alert liaison to get training.

Cinda credits the task force with the success Illinois has had with AMBER Alerts. The state's first AMBER Alert success story is still etched in her memory. A 14-year-old boy told friends he was leaving the library with his uncle. The "uncle" turned out to be a registered sex offender and the child was saved after a citizen heard the AMBER Alert, spotted the suspect's vehicle on the Interstate and called 9-1-1. "It worked

TAKE 25 & KEEP KIDS ALIVE

On the 25th anniversary of National Missing Children's Day, parents were encouraged to take 25 minutes to talk to their kids about safety. The "Take 25" campaign includes tips to show a child how to stay safe at home, school, out and about and on the Internet. Some examples: Remind children that it's ok to say no to anything that makes them feel uncomfortable and set up "what if" situations to find out how your child will respond. More information can be found at www.take25.org.

VAN DRIVES AMBER ALERT MESSAGE HOME

The Wireless Foundation is now using a van to let motorists know they can sign up for free AMBER Alerts on their cell phones. The van displays the message "A CHILD IS CALLING FOR HELP" and www.wirelessamberalerts.org, the website where people can register for the alerts. The van began touring Washington, D.C. on June 11 to kick start National Wireless Safety Week.

FAREWELL TO AMBER ALERT ADVOCATE

Most people involved with AMBER Alerts know Nicole Hayes from the conferences, training sessions and her regular e-mails featuring "AMBER Alert Success Stories." Nicole is leaving the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children after many years. We wish Nicole the best of luck and offer our heartfelt thanks for her efforts. ☺

the way it is supposed to work," she said. "We reached out to the public and the public pulled through for us."

Cinda said the AMBER Alert has also been an important tool in shedding light on the work and resources available at missing person clearinghouses, and "people finally know we're here." However, she is worried that alerts will lose their credibility if proper criteria are not met or police officers do not receive ongoing training.

After working 27 years for the state of Illinois and for the past decade on missing children issues, Cinda said she will retire one day, but she won't quit. "I'll probably do what I do now from home and do it for nothing," she said. "I see myself being involved with child issues the rest of my life." ☺



Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius is joined by members of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation as she signs a proclamation declaring May 25 as Kansas Missing Children's Day.



National AMBER Alert Coordinator Regina B. Schofield joins child safety leaders to unveil new Wireless AMBER Alert van.

The AMBER Advocate

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