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## **Sheriff launches CHILD Project**

*By JENNIFER JONES-Telegram Staff Writer*

HERKIMER - Herkimer County Sheriff Christopher Farber launched the Children's Identification and Location Database Project here last week.

Known as the CHILD Project, this is a secure nationwide network and registry database that helps law enforcement and social service agencies locate and positively identify missing children and adults with the Iris Recognition Biometric Technology system. The county sheriff's office will be the first law enforcement agency in New York state to be a part of the project.

The Iris Recognition Biometric Technology system records the 230 to 240 different characteristics of the iris. No two irises are alike. The system can tell the difference between twins, and a person's left or right iris, because the formation of the iris is a random tearing of the cell membranes in the eye, explained CHILD Project President Sean Mullin.

CHILD project database is hosted by the Nation's Missing Children Organization and the National Center for Missing Adults. The system can detect a registered individual's identification within three seconds.

"According to U.S. Department of Justice studies, on average, more than 2,000 children are reported missing every day across the nation and there are currently over 47,000 active missing adult cases," Mullin said.

The system is portable and includes a webcam, the Iris Recognition system, a laptop, and a card printer is optional. First an individual has a picture taken with the webcam, and then has some basic demographic information entered into the database. Next comes the Iris Recognition Biometric system. The system is fully automated. It will tell those registering how to position themselves in order to capture an accurate image of the irises.

"It is the first real approach to a national effort," Mullin said.

Mullin's cited the death row inmate who escaped in Texas. He said if that correctional facility had the CHILD project system, that man wouldn't have been able to walk out.

"This cannot be used for anything other than identification," Mullin explained about the system's weaknesses. It can be used for forensic investigations.

"It's tough to get a print from a 4-year-old child," said Herkimer police officer Anthony Brindisi.

Mullen explained the benefit of the new system is that children as young as one can use the technology.

Farber said that if any parent or senior citizen wants to sign up, they can do so at the sheriff's office.