

In new child ID database, the eyes have it

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LAPORTE -- Nine-year-old Alexia Zarantonello spent her Friday morning becoming the first child in Indiana to enroll in the state's first-ever child identification database.

Alexia, LaPorte County Sheriff Jim Arnold's granddaughter, described the record-breaking experience as exciting.

"I feel good about it because I'm the first person," she said while her sister Olivia, 5, registered.

The two girls registered in the Children's Identification and Location Database (CHILD) -- a program identifying children through scanning the iris of the eye, which doesn't change throughout adulthood.



Photo: By Mike Kellems

Susan Carpenter (seated, left) shows Olivia Zarantonello, 5 (in green sweater) the new child identification scanner technology at the LaPorte County Sheriff's Department Friday. Also watching are Olivia's sister Alexia, 9, and (from left) Kevin O'Reilly, U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola and Sheriff Jim Arnold.

Arnold, along with U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola, R-Bristol, officially launched the database Friday morning at a press conference at the LaPorte County Sheriff's Department, making Indiana one of 25 states to install CHILD.

Chocola presented Arnold with a \$24,681 check in August for the technology.

"This is a much more satisfying part of the process," Chocola said following the press conference, "to actually see the tools that will help our children."

Chocola hailed Arnold's foresight in the two-year project.

"It's a great leadership example for the state," he said.

Scanning the iris took some five minutes and will hold a child's identity information forever. The database would be able to identify a missing child in three to five seconds, said Susan Carpenter, development officer for Biometric Intelligence and Identification Technologies, the company that offers the database.

The database also has capabilities of tracking former felony inmates and registering and locating sex offenders.

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