

SHERIFF GOES FIRST KEEPING AN EYE ON KIDS



LISA BUL photos/The Patriot Ledger

■ The CHILD Project development officer Susan Carpenter has a retina scan, above, while chief operating officer Bob Melle operates the system this week at the company's Plymouth headquarters. The system identifies children with a retina scanner and links them to personal information in its database. The technology will be used by police departments to identify missing children. One of the system's screens showing a child's photo and information is shown at right.



Plymouth firm's goal is database to ID children

By STEVE ADAMS
The Patriot Ledger

PLYMOUTH

A Plymouth firm is taking the first step this week toward its ambitious goal of building a nationwide database to help identify missing children.

Hampshire County Sheriff Robert Garvey plans to hold a press conference tomorrow to unveil his office's adoption of The CHILD Project LLC's iris scanning and recognition program. Garvey, the first sheriff to order the program, said his deputies will visit schools in the fall and encourage students to participate.

The eye scan will augment the voluntary fingerprint and DNA databases that many sheriff's offices are building to help them identify lost or runaway children, CHILD Project spokesman Kevin O'Reilly said. The company's name is short for Children's Identification and Location Database.

Garvey said the system will be quicker and more accurate than fingerprints because they need to be sent to the FBI for analysis.

"This is a step further in terms of sophistication," Garvey said.

CHILD Project President Sean Mullin of Plymouth is partnering with the Phoenix-based Nation's Missing Children Organization to build an online database of iris scans and personal information submitted by thousands of sheriff's departments around the country.

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The CHILD Project development officer Susan Carpenter scans her retina at the company's Plymouth offices. The company's system identifies children with a retina scanner and links the scan to personal information in its database. The technology is intended to help law enforcement agencies identify missing children.

Plymouth firm has plan to ID missing kids

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Iris scans are a growing tool in the security business. They analyze the random variations in the colored tissue surrounding the pupil, recording the individual's unique characteristics.

Boston's Logan Airport is one of five U.S. airports testing an iris-recognition program to speed American Airlines customers through check-in. The Nine Zero luxury hotel in downtown Boston has replaced plastic keys with iris-scanning security systems for some of its guests.

Mullin got experience in iris scanning programs at the Point Group Cos. in Plymouth, working with the Plymouth County Sheriff's Department and other

correction facilities to develop electronic fingerprinting and digital photographs for inmates' files.

Parental consent will be required for the iris scans and the data will automatically be removed from the system when the child turns 21, or sooner if the parent requests it, O'Reilly said.

The CHILD Project sells the systems for \$25,000 apiece, which includes the iris recognition camera, recognition software and a PC workstation.

The system was endorsed last year by the National Sheriff's Association, of which Garvey is the president. The company is now looking for other sheriffs to sign up for the program so that it can build a nationwide database.

"This is the beginning of a very long

process," O'Reilly said. "The more children are enrolled, the better chance they have of making it work."

But financial constraints may limit the program's proliferation.

John Birtwell, a spokesman for Plymouth County Sheriff Joseph McDonald Jr., said his department won't be participating until it resolves a \$4.4 million budget deficit for the fiscal year that ends June 30.

"It's a great system, but right now the difficulty is we're sort of digging our way out of a budget crisis," Birtwell said. "It would be either on our Christmas list or our wish list for things we'd look at."

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