

# Old Colony Memorial

## Build a better milk carton

*By Chris Nelson*

*MPG Newspapers*

PLYMOUTH (Aug 13) - Five years have passed since Molly Bish was abducted from Comins Pond in Warren, where she worked as a lifeguard. Yet Magi Bish still wonders if an up-to-date photograph could have led to her daughter's safe recovery.

"If we had a poster-specific photo of her printed on an identification card we could have gotten it to the police right away," Bish said from her Warren home. "I don't know if it would have made a difference in Molly's case because they didn't even come to us for a photo until 24 hours after she was reported missing. But the most important thing is time, and we lost too much time trying to find a picture of Molly."

Molly Bish was 16 years old when she was abducted around 10:30 a.m. June 27, 2000; her remains were discovered June 9, 2003, five miles from the Bish family home. No one has ever been charged in the case.

A new technology recently developed by a Manomet company could increase the odds of finding the thousands of children and adults reported missing every year, many of whom are never found. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, more than 2,000 children are reported missing across the country every day. In addition, some 47,000 cases of missing adults remain unsolved.

The system, dubbed Children's Location Database (CHILD) Project, was unveiled Aug. 9 at a press conference hosted by Plymouth County Sheriff Joe McDonald. Also attending were the sheriffs of Dukes, Barnstable and Franklin counties, and Magi Bish.

The four sheriffs departments have teamed up to launch what is considered the nation's first regional child protection system. It was developed by CHILD PROJECT LLC of 488 State Road. It uses iris recognition biometric technology - essentially, a photograph of the iris, or outer rim of the eye.

"Today marks a significant milestone for this important project," McDonald said in a written statement. "Working together, my fellow sheriffs and I will be the first in the nation to utilize this exciting new technology on a regional basis."

CHILD Project technology essentially captures two digital images: a head-and-shoulders photograph of an individual and a separate shot of that person's irises. Both are paired in a secure database maintained by the Phoenix-based Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO) and National Center for Missing Adults.

Inclusion in CHILD Project is strictly voluntary and relatively simple. The actual process lasts about 10 seconds, and there is no messy ink associated with fingerprinting.

An individual's file is maintained in the NMCO database and can be retrieved within a few seconds. Files are expunged when a person turns 18, unless indicated otherwise.

CHILD Project founder Sean Mullin said biometric iris recognition technology is perhaps the most accurate available. The technology is considered superior to the traditional forensic tools of fingerprinting and even DNA. There is virtually no chance any two people will share the same iris characteristics, which never change after a person's second birthday.

"This little video camera takes a digital picture of your iris, recording about 235 individual features in the process," he said. "But the beauty of this technology is it's pretty much impossible to find two people with matching irises, not even identical twins. It would take 13 times the Earth's population to find a match."

CHILD Project spent the last two years writing the software for the iris recognition system, which costs about \$25,000. The software was developed by Iridian Technologies of Moorestown, NJ. Iridian's ProofPositive

certified hardware and software positively determine an individual's identity by capturing and digitally encoding an image of the iris.

The system also uses iris-reading technology supplied by Panasonic Security Systems.

Nationwide, law enforcement agencies have heartily endorsed CHILD Project, including the National Sheriff's Association. The company received 10 times the interest it expected when it began marketing the system in May.

"We just implemented it a few months ago, but already 1,209 sheriffs departments across the country have requested it," Mullin said. "We are just overwhelmed with the response; we expected 100 departments to respond favorably."

CHILD Project officials hope to fulfill 600 of those requests this year and another 400 next year.

"We estimate it will take us about three to five years to build the database," Mullin said. "When we're finished, we hope to have 3 million to 7 million names included, covering the entire country."

Thus far, only six jurisdictions nationwide have purchased the technology. But they represent some of the largest law-enforcement agencies in the country, including the Maricopa County sheriff's department in Phoenix, which processes approximately 180,000 bookings yearly.

"Absolutely, there is a law enforcement application here," Mullin said. "Corrections facilities use the technology because it can prevent erroneous releases of prisoners."

Despite CHILD Project's promise of multiple uses, it may always be viewed first as a tool to track down missing children or adults. That's fine with Magi Bish, who has become a staunch supporter of the program.

"For three years, we've lived in hell, it's indescribable," she said. "We've become advocates of CHILD Project because if there is any way to prevent another child from not becoming a victim, then we'll support it."