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New Child Protection Technology Debuts in Phoenix Using Biometrics

The Nation's Missing Children Organization and National Center for Missing Adults to host nationwide biometric system

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PHOENIX, Ariz. -- The Nation's Missing Children Organization and National Center for Missing Adults (NMCO) introduced a new system today that will identify and locate missing children and adults through the use of Iris Recognition Biometric Technology.

At a press conference held at their office in Phoenix, NMCO demonstrated and officially launched The Children's Identification and Location Database (CHILD) Project; a secure network and registry, which will be available to law enforcement and social service agencies across the nation and maintained at NMCO's headquarters. The CHILD project will create a national registry designed to give authorized users access to data that can positively identify children in seconds.

Iris recognition biometric technology positively determines the identity of an individual by capturing a high-resolution digital photograph of an individual's iris. The technology can tell the difference between twins or even an individual's right and left eye. The technology is non-intrusive and an image of the iris is captured by simply looking into the camera.

The CHILD project will offer concerned agencies and organizations a low cost iris recognition system that will enable authorized users access to NMCO's database to both enroll individuals in the program and check them against the nationwide database. Participation is entirely voluntary, just as it is now with fingerprint and photo ID card programs.

Kym Pasqualini, President and CEO of the Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO) said, "This unique and innovative program will fill an important gap in our nation's ability to quickly, and positively identify missing children and adults."

"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," said Sean Mullin, President of the CHILD Project. "We are pleased to team up with NMCO to provide a technology that can help reunite missing children with their families."

Also participating in the national kick-off were Massachusetts Sheriff Robert Garvey and child protection advocate John Bish. Sheriff Garvey has used iris biometric recognition technology to track inmates in his correctional facility for a number of years and came up with the idea of expanding the use of the technology to help identify and locate missing children. Working with retired Sheriff Peter Y. Flynn and President of the CHILD Project, Sean Mullin, Sheriff Garvey brought his idea to the National Sheriff's Association, which endorsed the project in June 2004. Since that time over 1,100 sheriffs across the nation have agreed to participate in the CHILD Project.

"Today marks the official beginning of this important project," said Sheriff Garvey. "It is my hope that over the coming years every sheriff in the nation will have one of these systems at their disposal to help identify, locate and reunite missing individuals with their families."

Joining Sheriff Garvey at the kick-off was John Bish. John and his wife Magi tragically lost their daughter when she was abducted from her lifeguard job in Warren, Massachusetts. The search for Molly came to a heartbreaking end when her remains were found three years later. John and Magi Bish were determined that no other family should experience the nightmare of missing a child. Several months after Molly disappeared, they established the Molly Bish Foundation, an organization that is devoted to promoting child safety through education and prevention.

Mr. Bish sees the use of iris biometric recognition technology as another important tool in protecting our nation's children. "We want to assure that no other child, no other family goes through this situation again," said Mr. Bish.

With this official launch, the CHILD Project team will continue to identify sheriffs' offices who want to participate in the program and will work with them to secure funding for the system from state and federal agencies and private foundations.
