

## The Republican.

### Iris scan to help find missing

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NORTHAMPTON - Until recently, the tools to help find the missing have been identification cards, fingerprints and dental records.

Now there is a new device: Iris recognition biometric technology. Scanning the iris of a person's eye and registering the details will speed the identification process, those involved said.

The technology has been used in airports and for other security measures.

Hampshire County Sheriff Robert Garvey has been using it for years at the Hampshire County Jail. But it was his idea to give it another use - helping in the search for the missing.

Garvey along with others including John J. Bish, father of Molly Anne Bish who was missing for nearly three years before her body was found, unveiled the new equipment yesterday afternoon at the Union Station Restaurant.

About 100 people attended, including area police chiefs, Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth D. Scheibel and other law enforcement officials as well as those who work with the elderly.

After Garvey's office receives the equipment in a week or two, it will be taken around to register people this summer. In the fall, Garvey hopes to bring it into schools.

The sheriff's office is the first in the nation to begin using the technology for this purpose, but more than 1,000 sheriffs across the country have agreed to participate in the system, explained Sean Mullin, the president of The Children's Identification and Location Database project - the national network and registry that allows the missing to be identified.

He expects that number to double by next year. He praised Garvey for his role in the nationwide effort.

The way it works is simple. A person's eye is scanned, then data such as name, description and date of birth and a photo are entered into a computer system with the data server in Phoenix, Ariz.

If that person is found somewhere and police have the equipment, they can scan that person's iris and within seconds know the identity of that person. Identifying someone through fingerprints can take weeks, said Kevin O'Reilly, director of communications of The CHILD Project.

"It enhances the current identification areas with new technology," Garvey said. "It's not a replacement." The technology only works with people who are alive, O'Reilly said.

Besides children, Garvey sees the equipment, which right now costs about \$25,000 as an effective tool for identifying adults with Alzheimer's.