

Hillsborough deputies to use iris scanning

By JULIE PACE
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TAMPA — Sheriff's deputies are known for having an eye for crime. Now authorities will be using other people's eyes to help solve crime.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office will become the first agency in the state and only the fourth nationwide to use technology that scans the eye's iris to help solve missing-person cases. Images of the iris will be entered into a national database that can find a match in less than five seconds.

The Child Identification and

Location Database, known as the Child Project, was created last year by two nonprofit groups, the Nation's Missing Children Organization and the Center for Missing Adults. The system uses biometric technology to scan the eye and capture the iris' unique characteristics.

Kevin O'Reilly, spokesman for the Child Project, and Col. Greg Brown, who spearheaded the project for the Sheriff's Office, unveiled the system Tuesday. About 1,200 agencies in 46 states have signed up for the project, which O'Reilly said will be a significant help in finding missing people.

Iris scanning is 12 times more accurate than fingerprinting, and a match can be found in about five seconds; it takes deputies 24 to 48 hours to find fingerprint matches.

The county will start using the Child Project on Aug. 1. The Sheriff's Office bought two mobile scanning units for \$25,000, one to stay at the sheriff's operations center in Ybor City and the other to be shared by the four district offices. Deputies will also bring the units to major community events so people can register.

Registration is free and voluntary. A small digital video cam-

era captures and stores an image of the iris; no lasers or high-powered lights are used. Brown said the technology is safe.

People concerned about giving out their personal information can have the iris scan done, but choose not to be entered in the national registry. Instead, deputies will give people a card with information that can be given to law enforcement agencies when needed. Iris scanning will not replace fingerprinting or DNA matching, Brown said, but the speed and accuracy of the technology will make law enforcement agencies more effective.