

The Child Project New Partnership Will Create Database to Identify Missing Persons

The Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO), National Center for Missing Adults (a division of NMCO) and The Point Group Companies, Inc. (TPG) have entered into a teaming agreement to create and maintain a new, and first-of-its-kind, national database designed to identify and locate missing adults and children through the use of iris recognition technology.

The biometrics project is a nationwide network and registry, utilizing iris scanning cameras that will be available to law enforcement and social service agencies throughout the country. Through this network, the project will compare the unique features contained in the iris against a database of individuals who enroll throughout the country to determine the identity of an individual. Complementing fingerprinting I.D. programs now in place, the biometrics project will capture a digital photograph of the individual's iris, along with basic demographic information. Unlike existing fingerprint I.D. programs, the biometrics project will create a national registry, securely maintained by NMCO, to give parents, law enforcement, and other authorized users of the system, access to data that can positively identify missing persons in seconds.

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. It will complement the excellent work already done by thousands of organizations and concerned citizens across the country by creating a secure, national database of the most accurate biometric known today."

Pasqualini noted that millions of fingerprint ID cards have already been created for children and their parents or guardians. "However," she said, "That's only part of the solution to this serious problem. Those cards are an excellent source of information for law enforcement and organizations like NMCO to help find missing children. Unfortunately, there is no database currently available to quickly verify the true identity of a missing child or adult. This program fills that critical gap."

IMPACT ON THE JUVENILE POPULATION

Children go missing everyday. A large portion of those missing are runaways who may in fact come in contact with a law enforcement agency during their travels and attempt to provide false information in an effort to hide their identities. Iris Recognition Technology has the potential of quickly confirming an individual's identity providing the opportunity for intervention if they have been enrolled in the program. For more information regarding missing children please visit the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

IMPACT ON THE ADULT POPULATION

There are approximately 46,000 adults missing as of March 31, 2004. Of those missing, 17,439 are considered "at risk" or endangered missing; 6,309 are determined missing involuntarily; 7,691 are missing with disabilities; 1,046 are Catastrophe victims and 1,866 are placed into the "Other" category.

Individuals are reported missing due to various circumstances; psychiatric disability, diminished mental capacity (mentally challenged), a physical disability, a need for medication, issues with substance abuse, domestic violence, financial woes or other factors that can contribute to their disappearance that are not always clear.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health an estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older - 1 in 5 adults - suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. This figure translates to 44.3 million people.

According to national statistics released by the Alzheimer's Association an estimated 4.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, that number doubling since 1980. By 2050 the number of individuals with Alzheimer's disease could range from 11.3 million to 16 million. According to these statistics, many of us will have the

responsibility of caring for and protecting a family member who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Regardless of the circumstance of a person's disappearance every effort must be made to locate and confirm identity in order to provide intervention services and determine populations that may be more at risk.

TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIAL SERVICE

Iris recognition biometric technology positively determines the identity of an individual by capturing a high resolution digital photograph of the individual's iris. The technology is based on the most mathematically unique biometric -- even between twins or an individual's right and left eyes -- the iris of the eye. The technology is non-intrusive - the individual does not need to touch anything to use the system. Unlike other biometric technologies, there are no lasers, strong lights or any kind of harmful beams. By simply looking into the camera, an image of the iris is captured and placed in the national database. The iris recognition equipment is portable and simple to use, making it ideal for use at remote locations such as fairs and special events.

"Iris recognition technology will enhance the identification methods already in place by providing a quick and easy method of correctly identifying an individual. Photographs work well up to a certain point," said Mr. Mullin. "Physical appearance changes, however, from birth the iris never changes."

Rollout of the application is expected to begin in the spring. During the rollout phase the project partners will be contacting social service and public safety agencies, such as county sheriffs and police departments, to gauge their interest in participating in the program. The project will offer concerned agencies and organizations a low cost iris recognition system to use as part of their community outreach programs. The system 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about project, or to learn more about iris recognition, visit The Point Group online.

<http://www.nmco.org>

<http://www.findbiometrics.com/viewarticle.php?id=65>