

## Press Release

For Immediate Release:  
Tuesday, August 9, 2005

Contacts: Kevin O'Reilly, CHILD Project  
508-224-1600 ext. 318  
John Birtwell, Plymouth County Sheriff  
508-584-5911

### **Southeastern Massachusetts Sheriffs Unveil Nation's First Regional Child Protection Database**

#### ***New Technology Fills Critical Gap in Locating Missing Children and Adults in Four Counties***

(Plymouth, MA) – Sheriff's from four counties in southeastern Massachusetts 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 the Plymouth County Sheriff's Office, Sheriffs from Barnstable, Dukes, Nantucket and Plymouth counties demonstrated and officially launched The Children's Identification and Location Database (CHILD) Project. By working together, the four sheriffs will create the first regional iris biometric recognition system in the country for the purposes of identifying and locating missing persons.

The CHILD Project is a secure nationwide network and registry that enables participating agencies to locate and positively identify missing children and adults with iris biometric recognition technology. Through this network, the CHILD Project will compare the unique features contained in the iris against a database of individuals who voluntarily enroll throughout the country to determine identity. Participation is entirely voluntary, just as it is now with fingerprint and photo ID card programs. The concept for the system and its enabling software was developed by The CHILD Project, LLC of Plymouth Massachusetts

The enabling iris recognition biometric technology is provided by Iridian Technologies, Inc. of Moorestown, New Jersey. Iridian's ProofPositive™ certified hardware and software positively determines the identity of an individual by capturing and digitally encoding an image of the child's iris. In addition to high accuracy that can distinguish between twins or even an individual's right and left eye, Iridian's technology is highly scalable to millions of unique records. The system will employ Panasonic Security Systems' recently introduced BM-ET330 Iris Readers, which feature advanced user guidance technology along with the latest developments in iris recognition technology to deliver fast and accurate system enrollment and authentication. The technology is non-intrusive and an image of the iris is captured by simply looking into the camera.

"Today marks a significant milestone for this important project," said Plymouth County Sheriff Joseph McDonald. "Working together, my fellow sheriffs and I will utilize this exciting new technology on a regional basis."

"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," said Sheriff James Cummings from Barnstable County.

-more-

Sheriff Michael McCormack of Dukes County, noted that enrolling children in an iris recognition program like the CHILD Project is easy and non-intrusive, and provides for very accurate and rapid identification. "We believe iris recognition is setting the standard for biometric identity management, and we are delighted to participate in an innovative program to help protect our nation's children."

His thoughts were echoed by Nantucket County Sheriff Richard Bretschneider who stated, "We are pleased to team up to provide a technology that can help reunite missing children with their families."

Joining the Sheriffs at the kick-off was Magdelen Bish. Magi and her husband John 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. Magi and John 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.

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

The CHILD Project database will be hosted by The Nation's Missing Children Organization and National Center for Missing Adults (NMCO), a nonprofit agency providing nationwide assistance to law enforcement and families of missing persons. The agency, headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, was founded in 1994 and provides a variety of services including advocacy, search assistance, national distribution of information related to missing persons and various programs addressing child safety.

Kym Pasqualini, President and CEO of 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. "Working with the sheriffs and NMCO we look forward to reuniting missing children with their families."

With this regional launch, the CHILD Project team will continue to identify other 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. Over 1,200 sheriffs from across the country have already expressed an interest in participating in the project. To date, the system has been rolled out in Northampton, Massachusetts; Columbia, South Carolina; Tampa, Florida; Phoenix, Arizona and Kane County, Illinois. Future installations are scheduled for Las Vegas, Nevada; Tallahassee, Florida and Oakland California.

More information is available at [www.thechildproject.org](http://www.thechildproject.org) or [www.theyaremissd.org](http://www.theyaremissd.org).

###