

Press Release

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St. John's County Sheriff Debuts New Child Protection System ***Iris Recognition Biometric Technology Install will be Region's First***

(St. Augustine, FL) - The St. John's County Sheriff's Office 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 his office, St. John's County Sheriff David Shoar demonstrated and officially launched The Children's Identification and Location Database (CHILD) Project. His office will be the first in the area to install the CHILD Project System.

The CHILD Project is a secure nationwide network and registry that enables law enforcement and social service 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.

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.

"Today marks the official beginning of this important project in St. John's County," said Sheriff Shoars. "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."

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. "We are pleased to team up with NMCO to provide a technology that can help reunite missing children with their families."

With this official 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.

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