

## 2018 NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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# 2018 NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM

## AMBER ALERT PARTNERS FROM THE U.S., MEXICO AND CANADA GATHER TO LEARN, COLLABORATE AND HONOR SURVIVING FAMILIES



Alan R. Hanson, Principle Deputy Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)

The 2018 National AMBER Alert Symposium, held in Orlando, Florida, May 15-17, 2018, was attended by more than 100 partners including AMBER Alert Coordinators, Missing Persons Clearinghouse Managers, Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Coordinators and other child protection officials. More than 40 states, federally recognized tribes, Puerto Rico, Canada and Mexico were represented at this year's event. Program partners from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) participated in this year's event as well.

This year's symposium focused on the impact technology has on child exploitation and abduction, as well as how law enforcement and public safety professionals can use the latest advances to prevent and respond to incidents.

### U.S. Department of Justice welcoming remarks

"It's hard to think of a cause more worthy than the safety of our children, and it's hard to think of a group of people who've done more on behalf of that cause than all of you," remarked Alan R. Hanson, Principle Deputy Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), as he recognized and welcomed the participants of the 2018 National AMBER Alert Symposium. The AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) was very honored to have him open the event. Hanson thanked Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC), its National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) and NCMEC for their continued work and collaboration in the shared mission of supporting AMBER Alert programs across the nation and internationally.

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# 2018 NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM



AATTAP Administrator Jim Walters presented Donna Uzzell, Special Agent in Charge, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, with an award honoring her many years of stewardship and significant contributions to the CART program. Also pictured are Alan R. Hanson, Principle Deputy Assistant Attorney General, USDOJ; and James Antal, Associate Administrator, OJJDP.

Hanson recognized National Police Week, thanking law enforcement participants for their outstanding service on behalf of America's communities. He also recognized Pamela Foster and Amy Bloxom, two surviving family members of abducted and murdered children, who spoke with participants during the event, expressing his appreciation and admiration for their willingness and bravery in sharing their experiences.

Reflecting on the amazing work of the AMBER Alert partners, Hanson spoke of accomplishments and improvements in response and safe recoveries over the last five years. He noted that last year, AMBER Alert programs across the U.S. responded to 200 AMBER Alerts involving 263 children in 38 states, with almost 60 percent of those children recovered in three hours. He noted the powerful role the secondary distribution network has played in these alerts, with 94 percent of AMBER Alert cases in 2017 ending in successful recoveries due all or in part to the distribution of the alerts over this network.

"It's hard to imagine that there was a time, not terribly long ago, when this incredible resource wasn't available," said Hanson. "Of course, a positive outcome is never guaranteed, but the statistics show that when AMBER Alert is part of the response, the odds are very high that an abducted child will come home safely."

In speaking about his work and responsibilities, Hanson emphasized, "My role as National AMBER Alert Coordinator is one of my most critical responsibilities - and one I take seriously. I take great pride in knowing that my agency, particularly our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, plays such an important part in supporting the AMBER Alert network."

Hanson recognized AATTAP's significant training reach and impact through onsite and online learning events and offerings. He noted AATTAP's website and publication accomplishments, along with its stewardship of the DOJ Child Abduction Response Training (CART) initiative, training more than 250

CARTs, with 23 of those teams completing the rigorous CART Certification Program.

Hanson discussed how AATTAP is working with tribal partners, noting that the May 2016 abduction and murder of Ashlynn Mike from the Navajo Nation made clear that although much progress has been made through AMBER Alerts, significant work is still needed to assist tribes across the nation.

Hanson praised the Ashlynn Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act signed in April 2018 by President Trump, emphasizing the new law will “ensure that resources are available to help protect American Indian children and spare others the suffering that Pamela Foster and her family have endured.”

Hanson emphasized that AATTAP and OJJDP will continue to work with tribal partners, building upon the more than 1,500 tribal first responders and tribal child protection professionals who have been trained so far. He encouraged all participants to become familiar with the resources and integrated information provided through AATTAP’s Tribal Database website.

“In Indian Country—and across the country—AMBER Alert is making a difference,” said Hanson. He added that the strong and good work being done by the AMBER Alert partners in their states and communities is a principal force in stopping those who seek to abduct children.

“I would wager that the very existence of AMBER Alert has deterred criminals from carrying out their designs,” said Hanson.

“There’s no question that AMBER Alert is a potent public safety weapon and an enormous asset in our fight to protect children.”

Hanson remarked on the amazing progress of AMBER Alert since its inception 22 years ago. “From the seed of an idea planted on a radio talk show, AMBER Alert has grown into something very powerful, and very special—a national force for good. What a way to honor the memory of a little girl who, today, might have had a child of her own to look out for.”

### **Florida AMBER Alert partner recognized for creating child abduction response teams**

AATTAP Administrator Jim Walters presented Donna Uzzell, Special Agent in Charge, Statewide Investigative Services, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, with an award honoring her many years of stewardship and significant contributions to the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) program initiative and training.

Walters shared how Uzzell championed the CART concept in Florida and in her work over the past decade, expanding the program with FVTC, OJJDP and AATTAP. He noted how Uzzell’s leadership contributed to the development of a comprehensive curriculum, and thanked her for the many hours of expert instruction she and other CART instructors have provided to hundreds of CART training participants across the nation. “We would not be doing what we are today without the help of Donna,” said Walters.

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# 2018 NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM

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## **AWARN – Advanced alerting using next generation television**

Fiona James, Deputy Director of the AWARN Alliance, offered details about the advanced alerting program known as 'NextGen ATSC 3.0.' The system was approved November 2017 by the FCC. She explained the technology is ideal for mobile devices and connected vehicles and discussed how it worked during 2017's large-scale weather emergencies.

James acknowledged emergency managers' concerns about over-alerting, which causes people to tune out or ignore alerts. She described how providing incomplete information can inadvertently drive people into harm's way, noting how critically important it is to use targeted, geographic alerting with clear information and messaging.

James outlined AWARN's advantages, including geo-targeting capabilities, rich media (photo, video, maps and routes), ability to support multilingual content, message accessibility, deep indoor and mobile reception, device-wakeup capability and integration with social media platforms (creating a hybrid backchannel for alerting). She also noted its scalability to an unlimited number of devices.

Efforts are underway to migrate to a 'banner' style of alert for screen messaging, which can include a photo of the child. James noted users will be able to exit or close the banner or click on it for more information. AWARN can also deliver additional information and instructions to help the public better understand important messages and reduce calls for more details that can overload 911 call centers, law enforcement agencies and two-way communication systems.

AWARN is working to develop the best possible user experience by gathering input from focus groups including public safety professionals. A primary goal is to create a consistent look and feel across states so the public recognizes the messages as 'real' alerts--and not just another version of 'breaking news.' The transfer to ATSC 3.0 will move from market to market beginning in late 2018 as part of a strategic testing and rollout process. More information is available at [www.awarn.org](http://www.awarn.org).

## **Family abductions and cross-border cases: identifying and responding to high risk incidents and utilizing specialized resources**

Maureen Heads, Program Manager with the Missing Children Division at NCMEC, spoke about the increase in frequency and level of endangerment in family abduction cases. She said the majority of abductions, 66 percent, involve a family member; noting an increase from 57 percent in 2013.

Heads explained NCMEC's role in providing technical assistance and support to families, law enforcement and prosecutors. She noted that while those working in this area from NCMEC are not attorneys, they are well-positioned to assist both families and child protection professionals with process and resource needs.

Heads emphasized the important consideration that parental abduction cases may not involve taking a child through physical force or emotional persuasion, which is characteristic of stereotypical stranger abductions. Children in these cases may be completely unaware of a conflict or struggle between the parents and may go with the taking

parent as a matter of normal behavior, and because they trust the parent.

Heads illustrated the complexity this element of willingness can bring to the case. “The person you are helping one day may be the person you’re looking for the next day.”

Heads shared an overview of the work of Sharon Cooper, a specialized researcher at NCMEC, who developed a report highlight-

as it correlates to family abductions and the issuance of AMBER Alerts. She confirmed that in all situations and for all questions regarding family abduction cases, the best way to contact NCMEC for assistance is to call the main call center at 1-800-THE-LOST.

Cross-border cases were discussed, citing case report statistics and the importance of resource support and intervention to work toward ensuring these abducted children do

not leave the country. The timelines and progression of cross-border parental abduction cases underscore how important it is to act quickly on potential travel or cross-border movement rather than waiting.

Heads discussed the Mexican National AMBER Alert System (Alerta AMBER México), noting the strength and coordination of the program with NCMEC and U.S. AMBER Alert programs. She recognized the Mexi-

can system’s Coordinator for her leadership and expertise with the program.

Heads acknowledged that while it is daunting to consider all of the agencies, resources and people working in these cases, law enforcement and public safety professionals should not hesitate to take action in pursuing them. She encouraged participants to contact NCMEC as soon as possible in these cases, so they can assist with coordination and provide ongoing support and assistance from beginning to end.

ing parental abductions. The report discusses both realities and myths around these cases. She also highlighted legal issues regarding family abductions, citing federal statutes and explaining how they define both the authority and support available to investigators when responding to parental or family abductions.

Heads said law enforcement should not be hesitant about taking enforcement action in parental or family abduction cases. She presented statistics surrounding family violence



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## A surviving family's perspective: Amy Bloxom, mother of Justin Bloxom

Introducing Amy Bloxom, Jim Walters acknowledged the invaluable contribution she and other strong and courageous family members and survivors make to the AATTAP mission through their sharing of experiences and ongoing efforts following their families' ordeals.

Bloxom shared details about her late son Justin, who was 12-years-old when he was abducted from a friend's home in Stonewall, Louisiana, in March 2010. The boy was taken by a convicted sex offender who used messaging and social networking to lure him out of the house under the belief that he was meeting a girl from the area.

Bloxom described the impact of the loss of her child, the role technology played in his disappearance and how digital evidence played a key part in the conviction of his murderer.

Justin's murderer was able to lure him under false pretense through text messages.

"Four hours of text messaging is what it took for him to get to Justin," said Bloxom. She said killer Brian Horn knew he was texting a 12-year-old boy because her son shared his age in the messages.

Bloxom shared about the night Justin was abducted. She spoke of the tips and leads that came in once the AMBER Alert was issued, including the school teacher who was up late grading papers and spotted the 'Action Taxi' used by Horn.

She recalled how it felt in the hours during which she waited for any word during the search for Justin. "All I could do was just sit there and pray. All the things you start praying for, thinking about."

She also shared the moment when she learned of Justin's murder. "When I saw my big brother crying, who is this big, strong, fighting, high-adrenaline police officer...at that point, I knew I no longer had Justin."

It took four years for Horn to be tried for the murder. Beginning on March 28, 2014, Bloxom and her brother were the first to testify. The next day jurors were taken to the site of the murder. On March 31, all of



Amy Bloxom, mother of Justin Bloxom shares a surviving family perspective

the text messages sent between Horn and her son were read to the jury. This was the first time Bloxom had heard those messages.

She said it was haunting to listen to the texts, and how she wished her son had not answered them. The prosecutor and her support team helped her remember that Justin was only twelve and Horn was an adult who knew exactly what to say to lure her son.

The prosecution rested on April 5, 2014. After 45 minutes of deliberation, the jury found Horn guilty of first degree capital murder. During the penalty phase deliberations, Bloxom explained that one of the most redeeming moments during those horrible years of waiting for justice was to finally see her son's killer placed in handcuffs. "For four years I watched this man appear in street clothes and no handcuffs," she said. "Justin didn't have any rights."

Following the trial, jurors did not want to go immediately home, but instead visited Justin's memorial garden, which the community had built and maintained in the years following Justin's death. Bloxom recalled how one of the jurors spontaneously began to speak the Lord's Prayer, with all others joining in to offer up a prayer for Justin.

The same juror held a cross in his hands throughout the entire trial. As they prepared to leave the garden, he gave the cross to Bloxom.

The sentencing hearing was held 45 days later, on the day before what would have been Justin's 17th birthday. When Horn asked to speak, the judge told him his words were hollow and denied his request. The judge then sentenced Horn to death.

Bloxom said the best birthday gift that could be given to Justin was to see his killer spend his first night on death row in Angola prison.

Bloxom spoke of the power of the AMBER Alert and all the incredible work done by law enforcement, along with the amazing response and support of the community during the search and caring for the family. She shared examples of the community continuing to honor Justin during important milestones he would have experienced, such as his high school's 'Senior Night' and graduation ceremonies.

The taxi used by Horn was put back into rotation after the investigation and forensics were completed, yet ironically another crime was committed in that same vehicle. After the taxi was once again seized and to be auctioned, a local civilian bought the car and another taxi cab company paid to have the vehicle shredded and demolished.

Bloxom discussed her work to develop and pass 'Justin's Law,' which prohibits registered sex offenders from obtaining a taxi driving permit. Prior to its passage, a registered sex offender could obtain a license to drive a cab; background checks outside of the state of the permit were not required. Horn had been released from prison in Missouri in 2008.

In closing, Bloxom shared photos of her son's life, and of the memorial garden and events honoring him. "We relive this every day. Every day we wake up, we relive it; it doesn't just go away. But we keep talking about it, and keep sharing it, because what you do is so important to get these alerts out. What the FBI did with the cell phone was incredible, that work was a huge part of being able to make the case."

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# 2018 NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM

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## **A surviving family's perspective: Pamela Foster, mother of Ashlynnne Mike**

"May 2018 marks the second year of living without my beautiful daughter, who will never make it home."

Pamela Foster expressed how with each anniversary of Ashlynnne's murder, she relives the nightmare, experiencing again the feeling of being crushed to the core. Even now, she remarked, the feelings of helplessness are still very much alive. She never expected to face such a tragedy and did not expect to have to understand the crime of abduction. She said in the Navajo culture, they do not speak of or think about abductions, as they do not want to create or call forth such evil.

On May 2, 2016, Foster received news her daughter Ashlynnne and brother Ian were abducted on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. She received a call from her older daughter that they were taken in a red van. Foster said she immediately called her local police department but was transferred from one department to another, all in different towns.

Foster was desperately trying get someone to understand that she was in great distress, worry, fear and anger about what happened to her children. "I seriously thought that a missing persons call would get law enforcement on their toes and into action," she said. "That did not happen."

She turned to social media to share information and ask for help. Foster was in California and could not just get in her car and start searching. Hours had now passed and the sun had begun to set. In late evening, she received word Ian was seen running

in the desert by an elderly couple. Although reluctant to get into the couple's vehicle, he did because he was desperate to help his sister. Foster said she is grateful that this family helped him.

Foster described the frustration she felt because outside agencies could not search until authorization was given from the Navajo Nation. An AMBER alert was finally issued the next day around 2:30 p.m. "I can't even begin to describe the pain that I was in," she said. "I was happy my son had been found, but my daughter was still missing."

Overwhelmed with fear and emotion, Foster paced the floor waiting to be given information, wrestling with questions and searching for what to do. She prayed to God as the search for Ashlynnne ensued.

The next day, May 3, Foster continued posting information on social media, begging the public to please help search for her daughter. She spoke about the calls she received that morning, none of which brought any good news. Around noon she received a call,



Pamela Foster, the mother of 11-year-old Ashlynnne Mike

and upon hearing muffled sounds of crying on the other end of the phone, she knew the news was not good. Foster said she was heartbroken when she learned her daughter was found but had been murdered.

“The best way I can describe the way I felt in that moment is to compare it to a near death experience, seeing flashes of Ashlynnne’s life, from her birth through all the milestones of her precious life,” said Foster. “What I held to be so precious was taken from us.”

Foster spoke of how she wrestled with the evil of her daughter’s murderer. She said her faith helped her survive the torturous pain that was to follow.

“This monster abducted my children with the motive to rape and kill,” she said. “Since the death of my daughter, I have come to know that evil is not some kind of supernatural force, but it walks among us. It breaks my heart that the last thing she saw was him.”

“I know she was probably calling for us and was frightened for her little brother Ian. Only God knows when my baby girl took her last breath; she was precious and she did not deserve to die this way. To this day we all struggle with the reality that our daughter, little sister and friend was taken from us. I have become her voice, because hers was taken from her. At her eulogy, I spoke for her.”

In the weeks and months following Ashlynnne’s murder, Foster was determined to bring justice for her daughter, her family and her community. She organized a petition to bring the death penalty on the reservation, yet that effort did not succeed due to the tribe’s traditional values and beliefs.

She continued to find ways to advocate for what she felt needed to happen, spending hours writing to representatives in Congress, seeking help on a bill to ensure the Navajo Nation and all Indian tribes would have the ability to rapidly respond to reports of missing children and use AMBER Alert systems.

Foster recognized the diligent work of Senators John McCain and Heidi Heitkamp, and Congressman Andy Biggs, in bringing the AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act into Congress in the spring of 2017. She shared how during this time, she felt her spirit had died. Foster said she had no quiet time and was constantly bombarded by the media.

In a struggle to carry on, Foster put her energy into working for justice for Ashlynnne and for the passage of the Act and having it signed into law. With each visit to Washington D.C., and in meetings with lawmakers, Ashlynnne’s story became better known to legislators. Although she was exhausted, Foster said she pushed through daily, for her daughter.

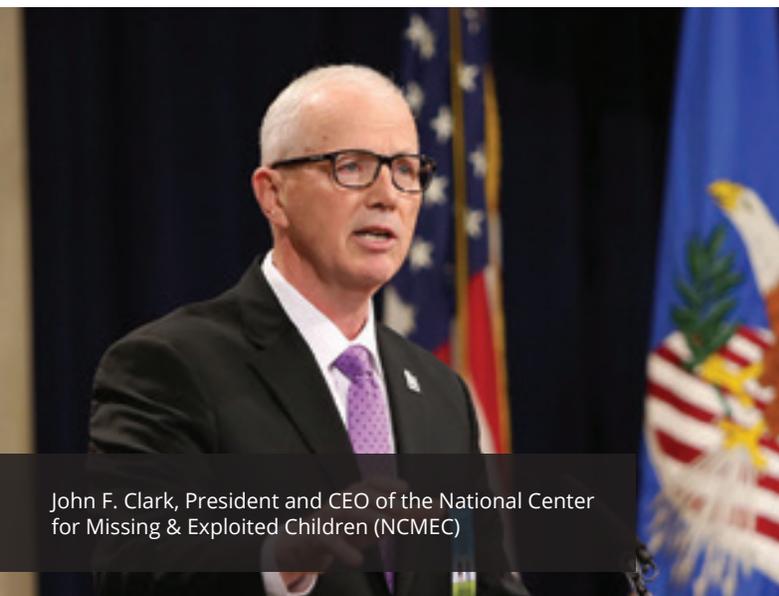
On October 20, 2017, Ashlynnne’s murderer was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for her abduction, rape and murder. On March 28, 2018, Navajo Nation leaders met with Congressman Biggs to commemorate the passage and renaming of the legislation to the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act during a press conference held at the Arizona State Capitol. On April 13, 2018, President Trump signed Ashlynnne’s Act into law.

Foster said Ashlynnne’s death has brought to light the broader issues of missing and murdered Native women and children, human trafficking and exploitation, and all of the evil and criminal actions surrounding what happened to Ashlynnne and other victims like

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# 2018 NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING CHILD PROTECTION, RESCUE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS



John F. Clark, President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)



Colin Blevin, of Santa Clara, CA, right, receives the Missing Children's Citizen Award from Acting Associate Attorney General Jesse Panuccio

### Awards presented in the US Department of Justice Great Hall

Missing Children's Day is recognized annually in Washington D.C., as well as states across the nation and countries around the globe. The U.S. Department of Justice held its 2018 awards ceremony on May 23, 2018, in the Great Hall, with event coordination by the Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Acting Associate Attorney General Jesse Panuccio recognized the child protection and missing children awareness efforts of both law enforcement and civilians.

"The exceptional individuals we recognize remind us of our responsibility to be vigilant about the safety of our children and to hold accountable those who seek to harm them," said Panuccio. "Because of their diligence,

courageousness, selflessness and commitment to protect the most vulnerable among us, children all over the country are safer in their communities."

President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the first National Missing Children's Day in 1985 to honor the memories of children still missing. Panuccio spoke about the importance of the AMBER Alert program in helping to find those children. "The AMBER Alert is a centerpiece of our child protection efforts and one of the most valuable public safety tools we have at our disposal."

### Missing Children's Law Enforcement Award

This award was given to Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department Detective John Witherspoon who worked tirelessly to investigate a case involving a 15-year-old

female runaway that began in December 2016.

“He scoured Montgomery County and traveled to northern Virginia every day for eight weeks to search locations where the girl had been seen,” said Panuccio. “Sadly, in mid-February of last year, her remains were found and her death was ruled a homicide.”

Witherspoon continued to work with police officers at another agency to identify and arrest ten gang members for their roles in the murder. He relocated the victim’s mother after she received death threats from gang members. Witherspoon also investigated 166 missing children cases in 2017 in which he located every child.

### Missing Children’s Citizen Award

This award was given to Colin Blevin, a Santa Clara, California, resident who responded to an AMBER Alert, helping police recover an abducted infant and capture the kidnapper. On July 17, 2017, Blevin noticed a stolen car blocking the entrance to the construction site where he worked, also observing a baby inside the car. “I took the baby and I put him on my trailer, and I said, ‘I’m calling 911,’” Blevin told reporters. “The guy didn’t really seem to care. I think he realized he messed up. He was in for a stolen car and he stole a baby.”

The suspect then tried to steal another car to get away. “Blevin prevented the suspect from escaping with a one-year-old child in a stolen car and protected the baby until police arrived,” said Panuccio.

The offender was sentenced to more than five years in prison for felony child abuse and vehicle theft.

### Attorney General’s Special Commendation

This award was given to the Maryland Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force for investigating a sexual predator who had been victimizing children since the 1970s. The ICAC Task Force received a tip from a man who said he had been abused by the suspect in the 1990s.

“They searched the suspect’s home, and during an interview, they learned he was still having sexual relationships with boys he met on Craigslist,” said Panuccio. “He admitted to engaging in sexual acts and producing child pornography throughout his adult life.”

Prosecutors are still screening charges after Maryland investigators identified 26 additional victims.

### Missing Children’s Child Protection Award

This award was given to Charles County, Maryland, Sheriff’s Office Detective George Higgs for investigating a case of a 16-year-old student athlete who was receiving sexually suggestive text messages from a school coach.

“A police lab analysis of the devices turned up videos of the suspect physically and sexually assaulting several children,” said Panuccio. “Based on screen captures, Detective Higgs determined the videos were produced in school buildings and in the suspect’s home.”

Detective Higgs was able to identify 42 victims between the ages of 13 and 17. The suspect, who was also confirmed to be HIV positive, was sentenced to 105 years in fed-

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# 2018 NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

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eral prison after being found guilty of 219 charges involving sexually abusing children and child pornography.

## Missing Children's Day Poster Contest Winner

More than 2,000 students from 37 states participated in the 2018 National Missing Children's Day poster contest sponsored by OJJDP. The top honor was awarded to Eden Hoffman, a fifth-grader from Huron Elementary School in Clinton Township, Michigan. "This poster symbolizes a family that has found their missing child," said Panuccio. "The heart behind them shows the bonds between the family. The colors on the words express hope, joy, and love."

Hoffman was honored with a plaque, a certificate of recognition and a trip to Washington, D.C., with her teacher Ameilia Vecchio.

## Father of murdered Maryland teen addresses 2018 National Missing Children's Day participants

Despite his pain and heartache after his daughter was murdered, Russell Barnes is now giving back to other families through his work with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and its Team

HOPE. His address at the 2018 National Missing Children's Day ceremony both encouraged and challenged law enforcement to be vigilant and never give up working to respond effectively to incidents of missing and abducted children.

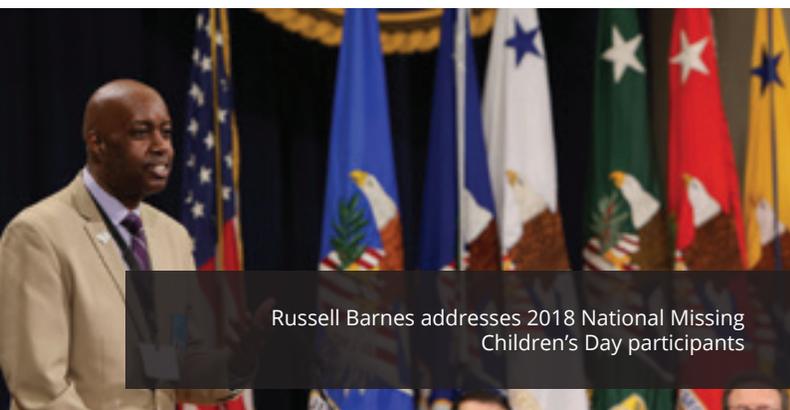
Barne's 16-year-old daughter Phylicia vanished while visiting her half-sister in Baltimore over the Christmas holidays in 2010. Her body was found in the Susquehanna River four months later. An ex-boyfriend of the victim's half-sister was arrested in her murder but he was acquitted after three different trials.

"I stand before you today to convey this message—our vulnerable children are being targeted and snatched in front of our eyes," said Barnes. "When that happens, we as parents, as their protectors, need the criminal justice system to do more to help us find them and bring their abductors to justice."

"My message to law enforcement--train your first responders to treat a missing child as if it was their child or a family member. Every second, every minute, every hour, every day, counts."

Barnes has dedicated his life to helping other families of missing and abducted children. He and his family founded the Phylicia Simone Barnes Foundation, which led the legislative effort to raise the age in Maryland from 14 to 17 for children who should be considered critically missing.

"Phylicia was my baby, and I knew she was going to be great," said Barnes. "I would look at her as a father and be amazed at her character. Her happiness, her silliness and just her book smarts. Purple was her favor-



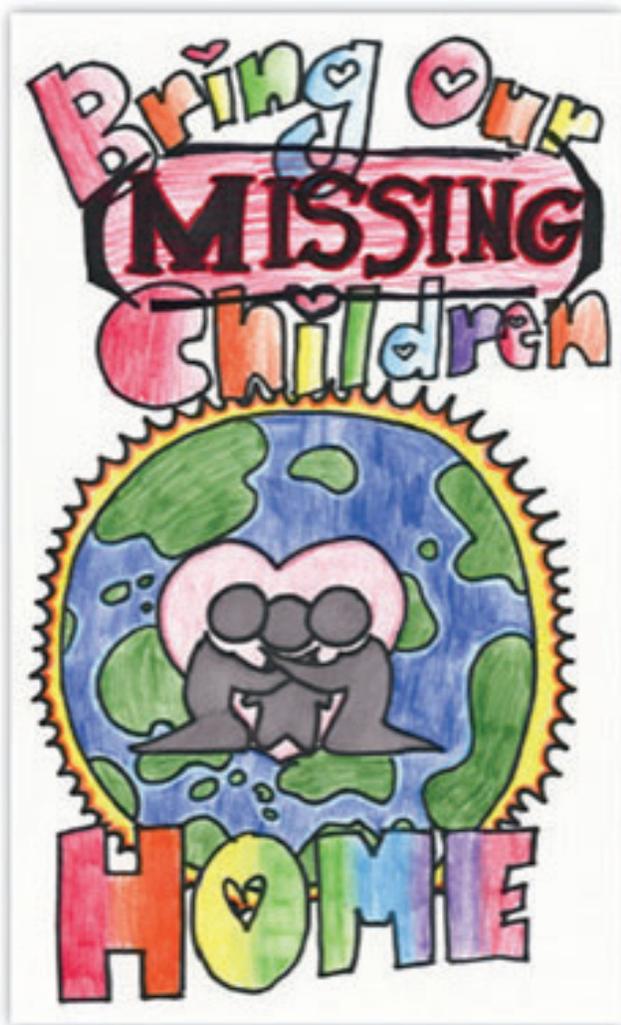
Russell Barnes addresses 2018 National Missing Children's Day participants

ite color. Her path in life, I felt, was going to be awesome. She was graduating with honors and had already been accepted to a major university at 16.”

In closing, Barnes recognized the importance of the ongoing effort to protect children and support families. “This senseless murder has been devastating to everyone in our family. Our world has changed forever. I know how other parents feel when searching for their missing children, and no one is listening. In 20 years, we will be remembered for change, or we will not be remem-

bered at all. Justice for Phylicia.” More information about NCMEC’s Team HOPE can be found at [www.missingkids.com/TEAMHOPE](http://www.missingkids.com/TEAMHOPE).

Additional details about the Phylicia Barnes Foundation can be found at [www.facebook.com/thepbsfoundation/](https://www.facebook.com/thepbsfoundation/).



## 2018 NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN’S DAY POSTER CONTEST WINNER

**Eden Hoffmann**  
Huron Elementary School,  
Clinton Township, MI



NCMEC President and CEO John Clark with Eden Hoffmann

# AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## ARTWORK DEDICATED TO NATIVE AMERICAN VICTIM AT THE 2018 NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY CEREMONY

Near the steps of the Great Hall of Justice in Washington D.C., a work of art was displayed for all who took part in the 2018 National Missing Children's Day ceremony. The painting depicts a sorrowful Native American girl holding a single eagle feather. The painting by Santa Fe, New Mexico, artist Kathleen Piccione is titled "Never Forgotten" and is dedicated to the memory of Ashlynnne Mike, a Navajo child abducted and murdered at the age of eleven in May of 2016.



Kathleen Piccione (left), Pamela Foster and John Clark with the painting "Never Forgotten"

Piccione said she was in the process of painting a Native American child when she learned of the abduction of Ashlynnne. "I began sobbing as I saw her picture and heard the horrific story of her death. I couldn't shake the sick feeling that came over me. Her face would not leave my mind. I walked into my studio and looked at the painting I had been working on for the past month. Her face was sweet and young like Ashlynnne, yet it was deeply sad."

"I knew at that moment I had somehow painted this for Ashlynnne, not knowing the tragedy that was about to unfold. I painted an eagle feather in the young girl's hand to represent Ashlynnne and called the painting

'Never Forgotten,' dedicating it to her forever."

Before the start of the Missing Children's Day ceremony, Piccione and Pamela Foster, mother of Ashlynnne, met with John Clark, CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), presenting him with a framed print of "Never Forgotten." The portrait will be displayed at NCMEC's headquarters in memory of Ashlynnne and all missing and abducted Native American and Alaskan Native children. Clark recognized Piccione for her generous donation and for the spirit of her work to bring awareness to the tragedy of child abductions in Indian Country.

"It's a beautiful painting," said Clark. "It's also important that we not forget the families of missing children. When a child goes missing, the heartbreak and pain has a ripple effect. It's not just the parents who suffer. It's the brothers, the sisters, the grandmothers, the grandfathers. The aunts, the uncles, the cousins. Extended family and friends. We know caring people want to help, but they often don't know what to do or what to say."

Piccione is originally from Wisconsin and has a family with strong ties to law enforcement and public service. She has also worked with tribal youth and community members for years, using art as a way to teach and heal. Santa Fe Print and Images donated its services for the print to be displayed at NCMEC.

Piccione plans to continue collaborating with NCMEC and the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program to raise awareness regarding AMBER Alert in Indian Country and hopes her work will inspire others to do the same. ☺

## PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNS BILL TO IMPROVE AMBER ALERTS ON TRIBAL LANDS

President Donald Trump signed into law a bill on April 13, 2018, that expands the AMBER Alert system to tribal communities. The passage of this legislation comes nearly two years after eleven-year-old Ashlynnne Mike was sexually assaulted and murdered on the Navajo Nation reservation in New Mexico. The Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act gives tribes direct access to federal grants to improve AMBER Alert systems and provide additional training and technical assistance.

“This new law makes critical resources available to protect American Indian children and, we hope, will spare others the loss and suffering endured by Ashlynnne’s family,”

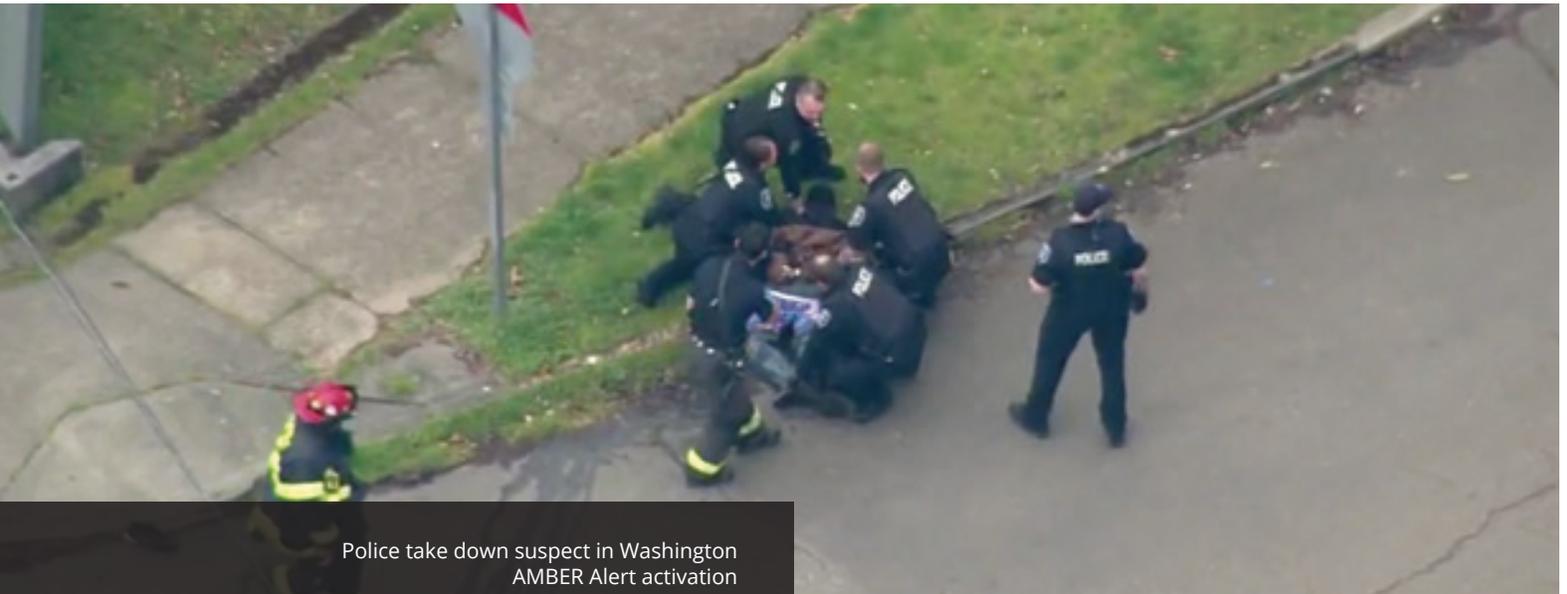
said Acting Associate Attorney General Jesse Panuccio.

Friends and family of Ashlynnne Mike gathered in Waterflow, New Mexico, the day after the act was signed. Hundreds of people participated in a 5k run, bike race and a visit to Ashlynnne’s school for presentations on safety awareness. “It is wonderful to have this AMBER Alert available to all the native nations across the United States,” said Gary Mike, Ashlynnne’s father. “But it is also bitter in knowing it had to come in our lives; to have something like this happen to our child to open the eyes of people.” 🌸



Friends and family gather to celebrate the signing of the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER ALERT in Indian Country Act

# AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:



Police take down suspect in Washington  
AMBER Alert activation

## WASHINGTON RESIDENTS RESPOND TO AMBER ALERT TO HELP RESCUE YOUNG BOY

Washington AMBER Alert Coordinator Carri Gordon was in the middle of a Child Abduction Response Team (CART) training when she received an email requesting an AMBER Alert for a case involving a five-year-old boy and custodial interference. The email was sent by the Lake Forest Police Department at 12:03 p.m. on March 28, 2018.

Gordon stepped out of the training to get more information. She talked to Lake Forest Police Chief Stephen Sutton and other officers to determine if the case met the criteria for an AMBER Alert.

The police said Taraille Chesney took his non-custodial son. At 11 a.m., dispatchers received a 911 call and could hear arguing before the call ended abruptly. When police officers arrived, the suspect drove away recklessly at a high rate of speed. Officers chased Chesney, but he got away.

“We were working with the state patrol to identify the criteria,” said Chief Sutton. “We were hung up on one criteria, ‘Was the child in danger?’”

Gordon works for the Washington State Patrol and knew the police chief, as they had worked together before. “I received clarification that the child had been taken by force from his custodial grandmother,” said Gordon. “The father was also known to law enforcement as being violent in the past and had outrun police earlier this same day.”

After determining the case met the criteria for an AMBER Alert, Gordon entered the alert at 1:24 p.m. through the state’s LEAP system, which sends emails and faxes to law enforcement, media, transportation and other stakeholders.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) also sent the alert

to public cell phones through the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system. The Washington State Emergency Management Division activated the Emergency Alert System and the Department of Transportation activated highway signs.

"I knew once the vehicle information went out that the calls would begin immediately, and they did," said Gordon. "Within minutes of the WEA activation the public began calling 911 with sightings of the vehicle within the city limits of Seattle," said Gordon.

After a short chase, police say the suspect was involved in multiple car collisions and rammed a Seattle police car, ultimately being surrounded by law enforcement vehicles. As police had their guns drawn, Chesney got out of the car and was taken into custody.

Officers took the boy out of the car moments later. News helicopters captured the arrest and the victim was later seen sitting with an officer on the trunk of a police car clutching a stuffed animal. The child was recovered 45 minutes after the AMBER Alert went out.

"The AMBER Alert system worked flawlessly," said Chief Sutton. "Our partners in law enforcement did a fantastic job getting the suspect into custody."

The suspect was arrested on suspicion of child endangerment, custodial interference, assault, violating a protection order, eluding police and driving under the influence.

"The alert was so effective in that it safely and quickly recovered the child," said Gordon. "I think this is a great example of how the system is intended to work and we would not have had such a quick and suc-

cessful conclusion without the help of the public."

Gordon says this case will also serve as a lesson in the future on the importance of finding out quickly whether a child is in danger.

"I just believe this alert is a great example of how all of the various aspects of the AMBER Alert system work together to get the word out to the public," said Gordon. "We rely on them to help recover abducted children, which is our goal with AMBER Alerts. We can always do better and should continue to learn from each success."

This was Washington's 86th alert since the program began in 2004. 

Washington AMBER Alert Coordinator Carri Gordon



# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS



## FORMER AMBER ALERT TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR NAMED AS U.S. DOJ COPS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Former AATTAP Administrator Phil Keith has been asked to oversee the nation's community oriented policing program. Keith has been named as the Director of the U.S. Department of Justice Department's Office of Community Oriented Police Services, or COPS Program. Keith oversaw the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance program from 2004 until 2014. From 1988 until 2004, he served as the Chief of Police for Knoxville, Tennessee, and has served with the Tennessee Police Chiefs Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and other notable organizations. He has received numerous awards and commendations for his expertise and leadership in law enforcement, community safety and child protection work. "My first priority will be carrying out the mission of the Attorney General's violent crime plan," said Keith. "We'll primarily be going back to basics, listening to law enforcement in the field, which has not been occurring for a while." ☺



## UTAH CITIZEN HONORED FOR RESPONDING TO AMBER ALERT THAT HELPED LOCATE FOUR GIRLS

The Iron County, Utah, Sheriff's Office recently honored Joseph Paul for helping find four girls who were being held captive in two locations. Paul started looking after an AMBER Alert was issued December 4, 2017. He spotted a man matching the suspect's description and called police. "Paul's quick thinking and intuition that night ultimately saved the lives of the four girls who had been kidnapped," said Iron County Sheriff Lieutenant Del Schosser. The Sheriff's Office reported the girls were in extremely poor health and physical condition because they were being held without any source of heat or adequate clothing for the harsh elements. ☺



## MISSOURI MAN REMEMBERED FOR WORK TO HELP FIND MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN

A Joplin, Missouri, man is being remembered for his work in creating a local form of the AMBER Alert. John Cruzan passed away on May 8, 2018. Before local police in Missouri completed their work on that state's AMBER Alert system, Cruzan created a website for local law enforcement to use in posting information and photos of missing children. While this local alerting system was decommissioned when other state and national alerting technologies were implemented, Cruzan's efforts were recognized by Missouri law enforcement and citizens as important, and his generosity remembered in developing the local alerting system. ☺

## MISSOURI MAN CHARGED FOR ATTACKING WRONG PERSON IN AMBER ALERT

A Missouri man is facing charges after reportedly ramming a vehicle and firing at a driver he suspected was wanted in connection with an Iowa AMBER Alert. Matthew Golden was traveling on Interstate 80 when he heard the alert for two missing boys from Toronto, Iowa. The alert included information about a 2006 Hyundai Sonata with Illinois license plates. Police say Golden rammed a white panel van with Florida plates more than once and then fired two shots at the driver. The driver was not injured. ☺



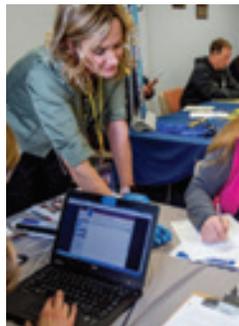
## MICHIGAN'S OVERHAUL OF STATE AMBER ALERT PROGRAM IMPROVES EFFECTIVENESS OF ALERTS

Michigan changed its criteria for issuing an AMBER Alert in 2017 so it would only be used for cases of child abductions for victims under the age of 18. At that same time, the state added an Endangered Missing Persons Advisory to notify law enforcement and the public about missing person cases that do not meet AMBER Alert criteria. After issuing 15 AMBER Alerts in 2016, Michigan issued just four alerts in 2017 and one in 2018. Michigan State Police said people are now paying more attention to AMBER Alerts and the Endangered Missing Advisory has become a great success in finding missing people of any age. ☺



## MICHIGAN CONSIDERS LAW REQUIRING ALL MISSING PERSONS TO BE ENTERED INTO NATIONAL DATABASE

Michigan legislators are proposing a bill that would require law enforcement officers to enter all missing person cases into the U.S. Department of Justice NamUs database. Proponents say it will help solve more missing person cases. The legislation would also require details about unidentified bodies to be submitted to the database. Similar laws have been passed in Tennessee, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. While these other states have differing requirements regarding when the information must be entered, the Michigan law would require entries to be made as soon as the preliminary investigation is completed. ☺



## CALIFORNIA "SMART LICENSE PLATES" TO DISPLAY AMBER ALERTS

California is currently testing the functionality on its new 'Reviver' digital license plates to allow the plates to display information about the car being stolen or involved in an AMBER Alert. The 'Reviver Plate' is now on thousands of cars and can also be used to update registration sticker information and other requirements. The digital plate costs \$699 and has a \$7 monthly fee. ☺



# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## PERU ANNOUNCES AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

Peru has launched an AMBER Alert system to help find missing and abducted children immediately after police are notified of their disappearance. Under the previous law, police had to wait 24 hours before they began looking for a missing child. Peru Minister Board President César Villanueva said he will also increase the number of emergency centers from 50 to 225 to better assist victims of sexual or gender-crimes. He is also increasing the number of municipal departments for children and teenagers. "One of our government's main priorities is the protection of women and children against all types of violence," stated Villanueva. "We cannot accept that this type of violence is still being tolerated by our society and by our public organizations." 🌱

## LITHUANIA LAUNCHES NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

Lithuania is the first Nordic country and the 19th member of the European Union to implement an AMBER Alert system. Lithuania began the abducted child alert system on March 14, 2018, to help recover missing and abducted children. The program alerts law enforcement and sends photos and information about the missing child to all Facebook users within 200 kilometers from where the child was last located. Belgium, Cyprus, The Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom already have a national child alert system in place. Bulgaria also launched its national AMBER Alert program earlier this year. 🌱

## CANADA TESTS EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM THAT SENDS MESSAGES TO ALL CELL PHONES, ALLOWS DRIVERS TO LEGALLY CHECK THEM

Canada tested its new emergency alert system on May 14, 2014. The system sends messages, including AMBER Alerts, to all cell phones in the country. The Alert Ready system is similar to the U.S. Wireless Emergency Alert system. Testing identified a glitch of sorts, as some people thought an actual AMBER Alert had been issued and some areas did not receive an alert sound. "The review ultimately determined there was a gap created during a recent server migration," said Royal Canadian Mounted Police Staff Sgt. Annie Linetau. "The test allowed us to identify a few issues, correct them, as well as implement a back-up system."

While holding a cell phone when driving is illegal in most parts of Canada, the law does recognize the new Alert Ready system, allowing drivers to use their cell phones when alerts are issued. Most provincial laws currently allow drivers to use their cell phones to contact emergency services or to learn about an emergency in the driver's vicinity. 🌱

## CANADIAN POLICE ADD NEW TOOL TO FIND MISSING PERSONS

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) marked its 2018 National Missing Children's Day by unveiling a new national DNA program to help find missing persons and identify human remains. The RMPC National DNA Databank collects samples from missing persons and unidentified human remains to determine if there is a match to a convicted offender or crime scene DNA. ↪

## EUROPE KICKS OFF CAMPAIGN FOR 2018 INTERNATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

AMBER Alert Europe launched an educational campaign on Missing Children's Day, May 25, 2018, to teach children how to protect themselves when they are lost or abducted. The campaign included a coloring book that helps children learn how to get from home to school and back safely. An animated video was also made available to instruct parents what to do if their child is missing. The prevention campaign was shared by police in Slovenia, France, Slovakia, The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Poland and The Czech Republic. ↪

## SPAIN JOINS THE EUROPEAN AMBER ALERT PROGRAM

Spain officially became part of the AMBER Alert Europe system on April 25, 2018. Police in that country hope membership will help improve the ability to find missing and abducted children. Police send alerts by text messages, email and message boards throughout Spain with information and pictures of missing children believed to be in imminent danger. ↪

## EUROPE CREATES FINGERPRINT DATABASE TO PROTECT MIGRANT CHILDREN FROM ABDUCTION

AMBER Alert Europe is now gathering fingerprints of migrant children coming to the European Union to safeguard them from becoming victims of human trafficking, as smugglers are increasingly targeting young children. The Eurodac is a biometric database that maintains fingerprint data for children as young as age six. During the procedure, an adult representative or guardian must be present to help the child feel comfortable and to make sure the child's rights are respected. ↪

## 2018 NATIONAL AMBER ALERT SYMPOSIUM Continued from page 11

her. "I see changes happening, but they are happening very slowly. I believe if there was some kind of system in place at the time of the kidnapping, we may have had a greater chance of finding Ashlynnne alive."

Foster said she feels her daughter's presence through her continued work to bring awareness to the issue of child protection, and the larger problem of missing and murdered women and children in Indian Country. "I hear Ashlynnne saying, 'Mommy please do something to help the children.' This is my

reason for advocating and standing strong to fight for protection and justice for Native women and children."

Foster thanked and challenged the participants to do everything possible to ensure that when a child goes missing, time is spent actively searching for the child and investigating the case, rather than being held up by bureaucracy or searching for what to do. "If you have tribes in your state, what are you doing to help them?"

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