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# National Missing Children's Day

MAY 23RD 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by*

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**United States of America** - Every year on May 25, Missourians are asked to remember the children who stare back from the posters of the missing. These are the faces of children who have been stolen from their families, run away from their families, or have been abandoned by their families. Regardless of the reason, these missing youth are in danger every day. It is the goal of National Missing Children's Day to bring public attention to the growing problem of missing children.

President Ronald Reagan first proclaimed National Missing Children's Day on May 25, 1983. It now serves as an annual reminder to Missouri and the nation that everyone can play a part in bringing a missing child home, and in preventing the occurrence of future missing children. All Missouri citizens are encouraged to drive with their headlights on throughout the day on May 25, to "light the way home" for our missing youth. The wearing of a white ribbon also symbolizes the continued fight to return children safely home.

In 2012, 5,561 children were reported missing to Missouri law enforcement agencies. These missing reports included runaways, family abductions, and non-

family abductions. At the end of 2012, 91 of these children were still missing. Thus far in 2013, there have been 1,966 children reported missing, 1,787 of which have been located.

The Missouri Missing Persons Clearinghouse reminds all parents and guardians to talk to children about child safety issues as a pro-active approach to curbing child abduction. In the same manner as reminding children to look both ways before crossing the street, children should be reminded often to follow these safety rules:

- **CHECK FIRST:** Check first with a trusted adult before going anywhere or accepting anything from anyone.
- **TAKE A BUDDY:** Never go alone; always take a friend. If a child **MUST** go somewhere alone, remind them to call before leaving, stay on a protected path, and check in upon arrival.
- **SAY NO:** Know that it is OK to say, “NO!” Teach children to tell a trusted adult if something makes them scared or uncomfortable.
- **BE SAFE:** Remind children they always have the right to stay safe.

Parents and guardians should have an emergency child identification kit. To create a child identification kit at home, simply place a quality photograph, such as a school picture, in a file with up-to-date information outlining the child’s height, weight, date of birth, hair color, eye color, guardian information, address, and distinguishing features such as scars, moles, glasses, braces, etc. Since children grow quickly and change a lot, the information should be updated at least once a year. The Patrol’s Missing Persons Clearinghouse has a Child ID System, which can be taken to schools, health and safety fairs, and civic meetings upon request to make free, wallet-sized child ID cards for parents.

Two critical tools in the fight against missing children are the Amber Alert Program and the Missouri Endangered Persons Advisory.

The mission of the Amber Alert Program is to develop and coordinate the efforts of law enforcement, the media, and transportation in order to increase public participation in safely recovering abducted children through targeted education, increased communication, and effective sharing of resources. In 2012, two statewide Amber Alerts were issued for six missing children, and all six of those children were recovered safely. The Missouri Endangered Persons Advisory was established in 2007, to protect missing persons who might not fall under the strict

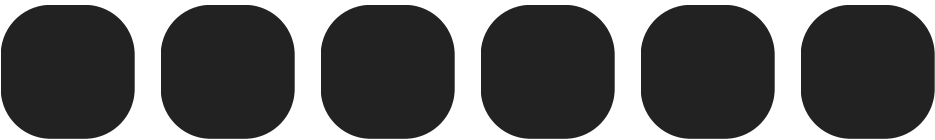
criteria established by the Amber Alert Plan.

For more information on child safety and Amber Alerts, or if you would like a child ID presentation at your local event, please contact the Missing Persons Clearinghouse at (573) 526-6178, or online at [www.mshp.dps.mo.gov](http://www.mshp.dps.mo.gov).

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