

COLORADO BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

MISSING CHILDREN PROJECT



ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE
COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1996

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MISSING CHILDREN PROJECT

ABOUT TIME AWARDS

THE ALERT CENTER, INC

KING SOOPERS

KOOL RADIO

MOUNTAIN CENTRAL SECURITY

RALSTON PURINA CONSUMER PRODUCTS

THE SOUTHWEST YMCA

DENVER ONLINE INTERNET SERVER

PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS

Wondrous Window

Ms. Erin Bee

Mr. and Mrs. Chris Gresham

Mr. Michael Howard

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Etter

VOLUNTEERS

Jeane Kalas

Kathy Porter

Dee Rhue

cdps

**COLORADO
DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Colorado Bureau of Investigation
Carl W. Whiteside, Director**

May 24, 1995

Imagine the uproar if two classrooms of elementary age students disappeared every day; 54 students showing up for class in the morning, but nowhere to be found at the end of the school day. Or consider the headlines if the entire population of Canon City, Colorado simply vanished on New Year's Day.

That's exactly what's happening here in Colorado. An average of 54 children are reported missing each and every day across the state, approximately 20-thousand children each year.

This report helps provide a better understanding of Colorado's missing children phenomena. Statistics confirm there is cause for concern, but do not begin to quantify the impact on those who have experienced the preventable loss of a child, nor do they identify the number of people affected by each incident.

Our thanks to the Colorado General Assembly for its support of the Missing Children Project and to law enforcement leaders who have worked so diligently to find and assist so many young people. The Colorado Bureau of Investigation pledges its continuing support to make Colorado a safer place for children.

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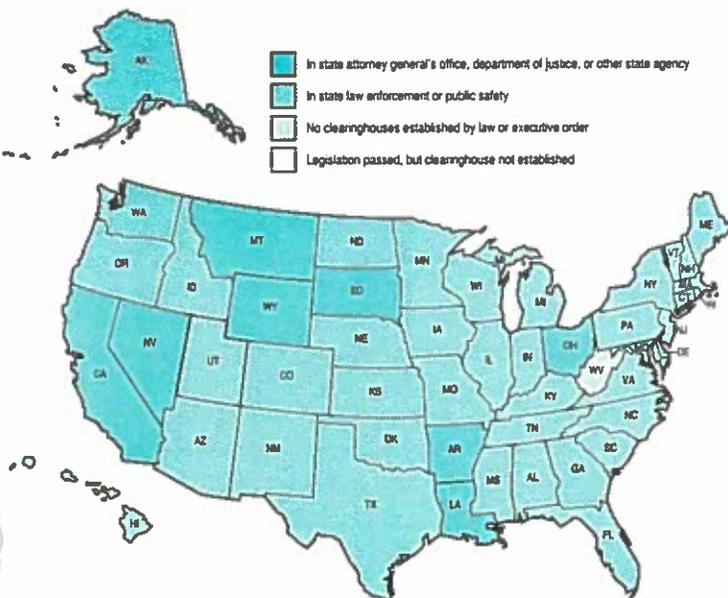
INTRODUCTION

Each year, thousands of children are reported missing in the United States. Although many return safely, those who are not continue to be exposed to harmful and dangerous situations. In response to the growing national concern for missing and exploited children, the Federal Children's Assistance Act was passed in 1982. It directed the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to become actively involved in missing children cases. Federal efforts were further strengthened by the creation of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in 1984.

During this time, child abduction cases were becoming more highly publicized in Colorado and public concern was mounting. In 1985, the legislature created the Colorado Missing Children Project. The Project serves as a central repository for information on missing children in order to better define the problem. It collects, compiles, exchanges, and disseminates information to help find missing children. Towards this end, the Project is responsible for obtaining dental records of children who have been missing thirty or more days, comparing new student records with reports of missing children, and reviewing each missing child report submitted by every law enforcement agency in Colorado.

The NCMEC and the United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention instituted a program establishing state level clearinghouses for missing children. Seven state projects, including Colorado's, were selected to participate in this pilot program. Because of its great success, there are now forty nine States with legislation authorizing missing children clearinghouses.

State Clearinghouses



DEFINITIONS

CCIC — Colorado Crime Information Center.

Kidnapped — A person who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance is not voluntary and who has been abducted by a stranger or non-family member.

Lost — A person who is presumed to have wandered away and has become lost and unable to return to a known location.

Missing child — A child whose whereabouts are unknown, whose domicile at the time he was first reported missing was Colorado, and whose age at the time he was reported missing was seventeen years or younger.

NCIC — National Crime Information Center.

NCMEC — The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Non-custodial abduction — The taking of a child by the non-custodial parent or family member, with the intent to deprive the legal parent or guardian possession of that child.

Runaway — An unemancipated juvenile who has left the home environment without a parent's or legal guardian's permission. (Classified as non-suspicious for statistical purposes.)

Suspicious — A person who is missing with insufficient information to enable placing the record in any other probable category.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MISSING CHILDREN PROJECT

LISTS

The Project compiles and distributes lists of missing children from reports submitted by local law enforcement agencies. The reports are released to school districts and to any other entity or person the Project determines may be instrumental in the identification and recovery of missing children.

STATISTICS

Consistent with statute, the Project maintains and distributes statistics on missing children which include:

The number of missing children reported.

The number of missing children cases resolved.

The approximate physical location at which each child was last seen.

The time of day each child was last seen.

The age, gender, and physical description of each child reported missing.

The activity the child was engaged in at the time last seen.

The number of reported sightings of missing children.

The Project documents the circumstances of recovery of missing children. These include a breakdown by age, race, and sex in cases resolved by: recovery by a law enforcement agency, recovery by an agency other than law enforcement, voluntarily returned, deceased, and circumstances unknown. These were summarized for the first time in the 1991 Annual Report to give a clearer picture of what is being done to resolve missing children cases in Colorado.

MONITORING

The Project reviews each missing child report to the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for validity, completeness and accuracy and insures the originating agency makes any necessary corrections or additions.

When a child has been missing for thirty days, the Project must attempt to obtain the child's dental records and attach them to the NCIC missing person report.

The Project sends lists of children missing from Colorado to each Colorado school district for comparison with their enrollment records to identify missing children in their schools. If a district chooses, it may submit enrollment lists to the Project for comparison with NCIC records to locate children missing from all states. When a match is verified, the Project notifies the appropriate authorities to facilitate the return of the missing child.

ACTIVITIES AS A STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Develop and present specialized training programs to criminal justice and youth service professionals.

Provide information regarding cases originating in Colorado to the NCMEC for inclusion in the national directory of missing and abducted children.

Provide and ensure follow-up on all missing children cases originating in other states but linked to Colorado in some way.

Provide information to out-of-state agencies concerning applicable Colorado State laws, relevant agency interrelationships, and recovery procedures.

Help reunite missing children with their lawful parent or guardian by establishing cooperative mechanisms with other state clearinghouses.

Act as a clearinghouse for photographs of missing children and cooperate with those who wish to publicize these photographs.

Assist in the preparation of missing children bulletins and their distribution to law enforcement agencies and school districts.

Counsel citizens and business groups on how they may respond to the plight of missing children.

Attempt to locate abductors by completing nationwide automated record and file searches and interacting with other organizations, agencies, or groups that may be instrumental in locating missing children.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Sponsor special programs for victim children and their parents or guardians. Such programs include the ADVO's "America's Looking for Its Missing Children" program which distributes over 16 billion photographs of missing children each year to over 53 million households. This program provides a much broader distribution of missing children bulletins than any single state Clearinghouse and has been directly responsible for reuniting 468 children with their families.

Project ALERT (America's Law Enforcement Retiree Team) was implemented to utilize the expertise and experience of retired law enforcement officers for the benefit of law enforcement agencies needing assistance with all categories of missing and exploited children cases. The assistance provided by these highly specialized volunteers includes, but is not limited to: case assistance, consultation, speaking engagements, and general administrative support to police agencies. All ALERT volunteers must have had extensive experience in the investigation of similar cases and must complete a one week training program developed by the NCMEC after which they are considered for certification. Currently the ALERT program consists of 69 certified volunteers nationwide. Upon request, a volunteer will be provided and any travel expenses paid by the NCMEC. The requesting agency is asked only to provide essential provisions (desk, telephone, etc.) and on-site transportation.

The NCMEC provides technical services to all law enforcement agencies in the search for missing children. The most instrumental has been computerized age enhancement. Through a donation, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has been able to set up a Video Imaging Laboratory. With this equipment, the NCMEC is able to distribute age enhanced pictures of missing children to law enforcement agencies and the general public more quickly, generating an earlier response, and improving the odds of finding the child. These services have also been extended to include face reconstruction of unidentified deceased persons, identification of children from confiscated child pornography, and the training of forensic artists using comparable equipment. Previously, artists had been able to create aged likenesses by hand using the pictures on file. However, it could take up to 80 hours to create a picture manually and is very expensive. With the electronic photography equipment, age-enhanced pictures can be produced in less than 5 hours.

In 1992, a grant from the Justice Department enabled the NCMEC to establish a national computerized information network utilizing various programs to distribute data on missing children. One program is a CompuServe forum which allows the clearinghouses to exchange information on missing children cases and participate in on-line discussions. Much of this information is now available to the general public through CompuServe in a forum called "Go Missing". Citizens can view posters, download publications and post messages. CompuServe's Internet Division has expanded global efforts by creating a web page that can bring images of missing children to millions of Internet users at: <http://www.missingkids.org>.

Mapinfo's Desktop Mapping Software allows the NCMEC to plot cases and sightings of missing children, establish profiles, link related cases, and pinpoint patterns. This information is compiled from both the missing children reports received from the Clearinghouses and from hot-line calls.

Training and technical assistance are provided to criminal justice and youth service professionals in both missing children issues and youth exploitation. Training and consultation are also provided to health care professionals in the prevention of infant abductions and the recovery of missing infants.

Transportation and lodging are provided for custodial parents who cannot afford such expenses to recover their missing child(ren). Through a voluntary effort on the part of hotel managers and coordinated by the NCMEC, Quality International will provide up to three nights lodging to a custodial parent and their child(ren). The "Let's Find Them" program designed by Greyhound/Trailways, provides transportation for a custodial parent to recover their missing child(ren). American Airlines also provides transportation but only in emergency situations when a child has been abducted by a stranger, or is believed to be endangered. Parents who wish to use these services must do so through the NCMEC.

After identifying pending legislation relating to missing and exploited children the NCMEC not only follows it through the legislative process, but keeps all clearinghouses apprised of its status. Handbooks for use by parents, law enforcement officers, attorneys, and federal, State, or local officials who deal with missing and exploited children are published and distributed in either hard copy or through the CompuServe Forum, "Go Missing". The handbooks available are: *Child Molesters: A Behavioral Analysis*; *Child Sex Rings: A Behavioral Analysis*; *Children Traumatized in Sex Rings*; *Interviewing Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation*; *Investigator's Guide to Missing Child Cases*; *Nonprofit Service Provider's Handbook*; *Parental Kidnapping*; *Selected State Legislation*; and *Youth At Risk*. The following brochures are also available and come in various languages: *Child Protection*; *For Camp Counselors*; *For Hospital Professionals*; *KIDS AND COMPANY: Together for Safety*; *My 8 Rules for Safety*; and a series called "Just in Case" which includes: *You Are Considering Highroad*; *You Are Considering Family Separation*; *You Are Dealing With the Loss of a Child*; *You Need a Babysitter*; *Your Child is a Runaway*; *Your Child is Missing*; *Your Child is Testifying in Court*; *Your Child is the Victim of Sexual Abuse or Exploitation*.

A twenty-four hour international hot-line to report information and request assistance concerning missing and exploited children is managed by the NCMEC and made available in the United States, Canada and Mexico to help ensure case follow up by the proper authorities. Also administered by the NCMEC is the National Child Pornography Tipline and the Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Hot-line.

SPECIAL RESOURCES

VALE GRANT

The Colorado General Assembly enacted House Bill 1264 in 1985 to establish the Assistance to Victims and Witnesses to Crime and Aid to Law Enforcement Act. The Act mandates a surcharge on fines imposed for felonies, misdemeanors and class 1 and 2 traffic offenses. A percentage of the monies collected is dispersed to the local Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement (VALE) boards to be awarded to agencies for projects and services. The Project has been fortunate to receive funding from the State VALE Board since 1990 which has enabled the Project staff to be increased by one part-time employee. The additional assistance in 1996 made it possible for the Project to provide "STRANGER AWARENESS" training to kindergarten, first, and second grade students in an effort to help children better understand what a stranger is, as well as teaching some basic safety tips.

CONTRIBUTING SUPPORT

TRANSPORTATION

Greyhound/Trailways offers a program for runaways who wish to return home. A law enforcement officer or officer of the court must escort the child to a local bus station and confirm a runaway report exists for the child and that a parent or guardian has been contacted. The bus company will then provide a one-way ticket for the child's return home.

NON-PROFIT ASSISTANCE

Many non-profit public assistance organizations are often the product of tragedy and grief. Such is the case with the A.L.I.E. (Abducted, Lost, Innocent and Enough) foundation which was organized in Colorado after the violent death of five-year old Aleszandra Berrelez in May of 1993. This non-profit organization is dedicated to providing a safer society for our children. It does so by: encouraging adults to become involved; providing literature, education, support and assistance; and donating bloodhounds to police departments for the purpose of saving lives and apprehending criminals.

Parents of Murdered Children (POMC), also originated from a similar experience and continues to grow as violent crime increases. POMC has over 100 chapters nationwide (including the Front Range Chapter in Denver) providing assistance and support to over 38,000 survivors throughout the United States and abroad. POMC was established to: provide ongoing emotional support to help parents and other survivors deal with their loss; provide contact with similarly bereaved persons and to establish support groups; provide information about the grieving process and the criminal justice system; communicate with professionals in support fields; and increase public awareness of the problems survivors face.

The Vector Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mission is to investigate, locate, and recover missing children in Colorado. The organization also educates children on how to stay safe and to raise public awareness of the problem of missing children.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores nationwide have taken leadership roles in the search for our missing children. After an attempted abduction in 1994 more than 2,000 Wal-Mart stores nationwide implemented a new security policy named in tribute to Adam Walsh. When a CODE-ADAM is announced, all store personnel stop job responsibilities to look for the lost child, this includes monitoring all of the store exits to ensure that the child does not leave the store.

Community involvement is very important in the recovery of missing children; public awareness and education can also lead to the prevention of this problem. Understanding this necessity the retail chain launched a photo display program which about 2,000 stores nationwide participate in. Wal-Mart offers exposure of missing children pictures, which has resulted in 3 documented cases of children being returned home within the first few months of the programs existence.

FACTS OF INTEREST 1996

The total number of children reported missing in 1996 is almost equal to the population of Canon City, Colorado.

An average of 54 children are reported missing every 24 hours in Colorado.

In 1996 97% of the children reported missing in Colorado were classified as non-suspicious cases or runaways.

Approximately 12% of the children reported missing were females under the age of 14.

Approximately 9% of the children reported missing were males under the age of 14.

Approximately 47% of the children reported missing were females 14 years of age and over.

Approximately 33% of the children reported missing were males 14 years of age and over.

In comparison to all other days of the week, more children were reported missing on Friday.

In comparison to all other months, more children were reported missing and more cases were resolved during the month of October.

The number of stranger abductions reported in 1996 increased by 15 cases from 1995.

The number of non-custodial family abductions reported in 1996 decreased by 29 cases from 1995.

Information in this report was provided to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by local law enforcement agencies using the CCIC automated information system. Each report filed with the local agency is entered into the CCIC computer as a separate case. The numbers reflect cases as opposed to actual missing children; i.e., some children may have been reported missing, recovered and subsequently missing once more. Also, because this data is based only on reports, the Project has no way of identifying those children who have not been reported to local authorities by parents, legal guardians, or subsequently by law enforcement to the CBI.

SPECIAL TRAINING

In April we were fortunate enough to host a BITMAC (Basic Investigative Techniques: Missing/Abducted Children) conference. The conference was three days long and covered: Missing Children; An Issue Perspective, Initial Response to Missing Child Cases, Investigation of Non-family Abduction, Family Abductions, Investigation of Voluntary Missing Children and Investigative Resources. Nineteen agencies from Colorado, one agency from Wyoming and The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children took part in this three day conference.

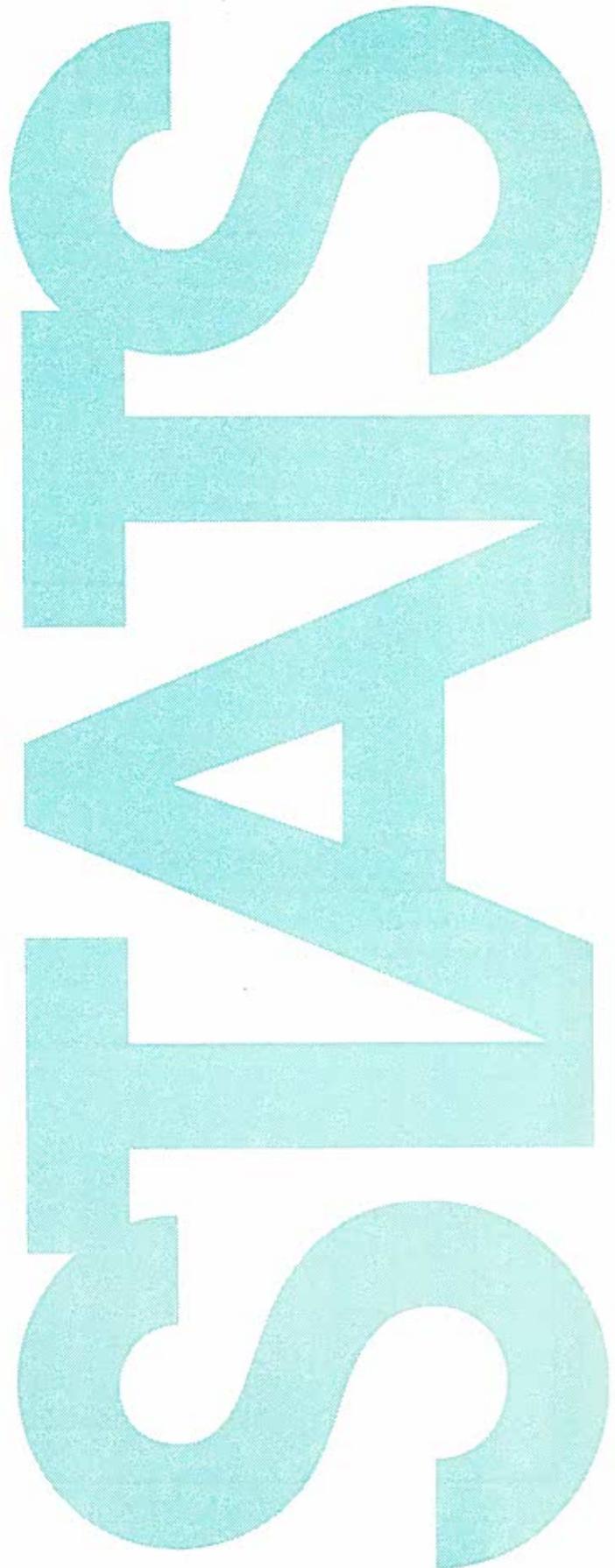
MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY EVENT

After a 6 year old boy disappeared as he walked alone to school in New York City in 1979, President Reagan proclaimed May 25 as National Missing Children's Day. For the first time Colorado observed this very special day, by having a Missing Children's Day Event.

On May 24, a candlelight vigil was staged at the State Capital in dedication to all of Colorado's missing children.

The main event a Child Safety Expo was held on May 25, at the Southwest YMCA. Participants included: Vector Foundation, they provided Kid Care ID's; The Alerte Center with Kid Vid videos; Colorado State Patrol promoted bicycle safety; Dottie's Daycare had information on choosing a quality daycare; the ALLIE foundation had one of their bloodhounds along with free stuffed animals; the Colorado Crime Prevention Association brought McGruff the Crime Fighting Pup to visit with the children, the U.S. Customs Department was there with one of their drug sniffing dogs; RADAC (Residents Against Drug and Crime); Federation of Families; Tough love; and the Denver Police Department.

Also donating their time to this special event were a storyteller, a magician, clowns, and the YMCA's karate class who made a presentation on simple ways children can defend themselves.



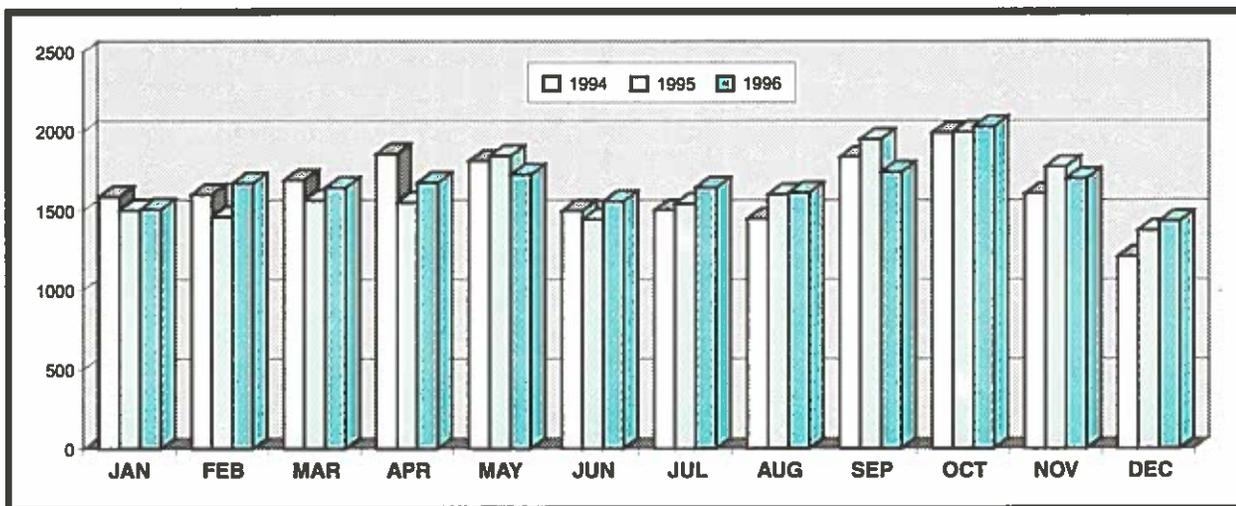
MISSING CHILDREN REPORTS RECEIVED AND REVIEWED

An average of 1,663 missing children reports were taken by Colorado law enforcement agencies each month. The most significant increase occurred in October, with an average increase of 396 reports.

JANUARY	1508
FEBRUARY	1673
MARCH	1644
APRIL	1677
MAY	1727
JUNE	1559
JULY	1645
AUGUST	1612
SEPTEMBER.....	1742
OCTOBER	2029
NOVEMBER	1702
DECEMBER	1432
TOTAL.....	19,950

MISSING CHILDREN ENTRIES

There was an increase of 1,546 missing children records from 1993 to 1995 and a slight decrease of 30 records from 1994 to 1995. In 1996 there was an increase of 337 reports.



CIRCUMSTANCES OF MISSING CHILDREN

Statistics indicate that of all the reports received, 96.63 percent were considered non-suspicious. This classification typically signifies children who have either run away from their residence or have been taken by a family member but are not considered to be a victim of a non-custodial abduction. Only .3 percent were categorized as children who were lost. Stranger abductions increased by 15 reports for a total of .2 percent, and .3 percent were non-custodial family abductions. A suspicious circumstance is a situation in which it is not believed that the child left by his/her own accord, but there is no evidence to prove there was an abduction. Of the reported cases, 2.6 percent were classified as suspicious.

AGE	NON-SUSPICIOUS	LOST	KIDNAPPED	FAMILY ABDUCTION	SUSPICIOUS	TOTALS
ONE	50	2	1	4	26	83
TWO	17	0	2	4	9	32
THREE	11	0	1	8	9	29
FOUR	16	0	3	7	9	35
FIVE	22	0	0	2	8	32
SIX	18	2	3	2	3	28
SEVEN	22	1	0	3	5	31
EIGHT	28	2	1	2	13	46
NINE	43	1	1	2	3	50
TEN	105	4	1	4	4	118
ELEVEN	225	1	1	1	5	233
TWELVE	889	4	3	3	40	939
THIRTEEN	2376	8	7	1	54	2446
FOURTEEN	4156	5	4	1	103	4269
FIFTEEN	4941	9	2	4	89	5045
SIXTEEN	4149	7	4	7	94	4261
SEVENTEEN	2210	9	3	1	50	2273
TOTAL	19278	55	37	56	524	19950

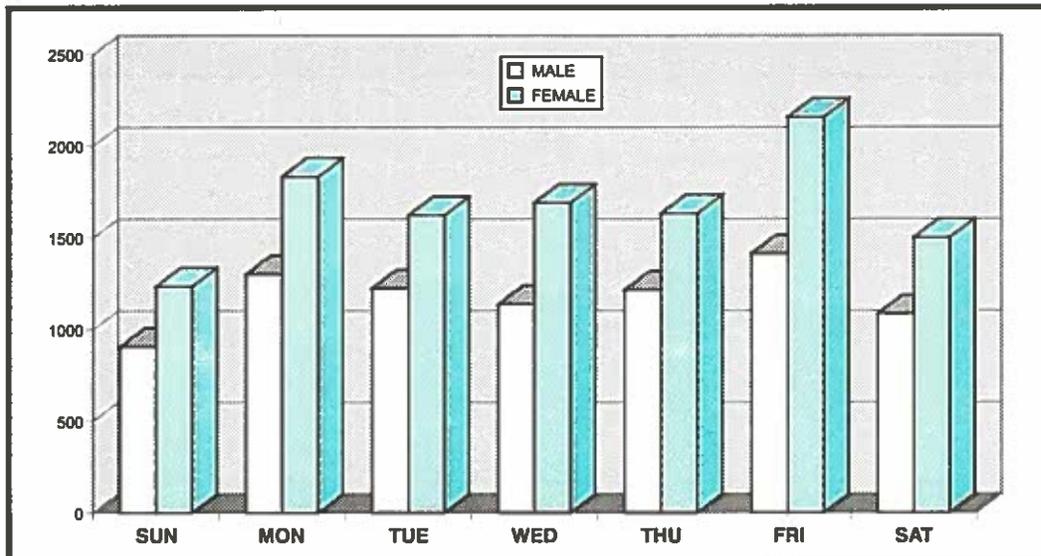
ACTIVITY REPORT

Most children, 80 percent, were reported to have been last seen inside their residence. A residence can be a family home, non-profit residential group home, foster home or residential treatment facility.

ACTIVITY	MALES	FEMALES
AT RESIDENCE INSIDE	9236	6649
AT RESIDENCE OUTSIDE	267	198
AT FRIEND/RELATIVE INSIDE	166	87
AT FRIEND/RELATIVE OUTSIDE	77	44
PUBLIC PLACE INSIDE	89	129
PUBLIC PLACE OUTSIDE	179	315
INSIDE SCHOOL BUILDING	223	137
OUTSIDE SCHOOL BUILDING	197	135
PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT	67	39
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES	166	87
TRAVELING TO/FROM ON FOOT	150	118
TRAVELING TO/FROM IN VEHICLE	112	52
TRAVELING TO/FROM BY BICYCLE	5	6
IN CUSTODY OF A PUBLIC INSTITUTION	141	141
LOCAL AREA TRIP	4	11
VACATION	20	10
UNKNOWN	394	299
TOTAL	11,493	8,457

DAY COUNT OF MISSING CHILDREN

Friday is the day that children are most often reported to have been last seen with 17.9 percent: 1,413 males and 2,157 females. Sunday is the day that children are least often reported missing with only 10.7 percent: 906 males and 1235 females. The largest disparity between the number of reports of males and females occurs on Friday with 744 more females than males being reported missing.



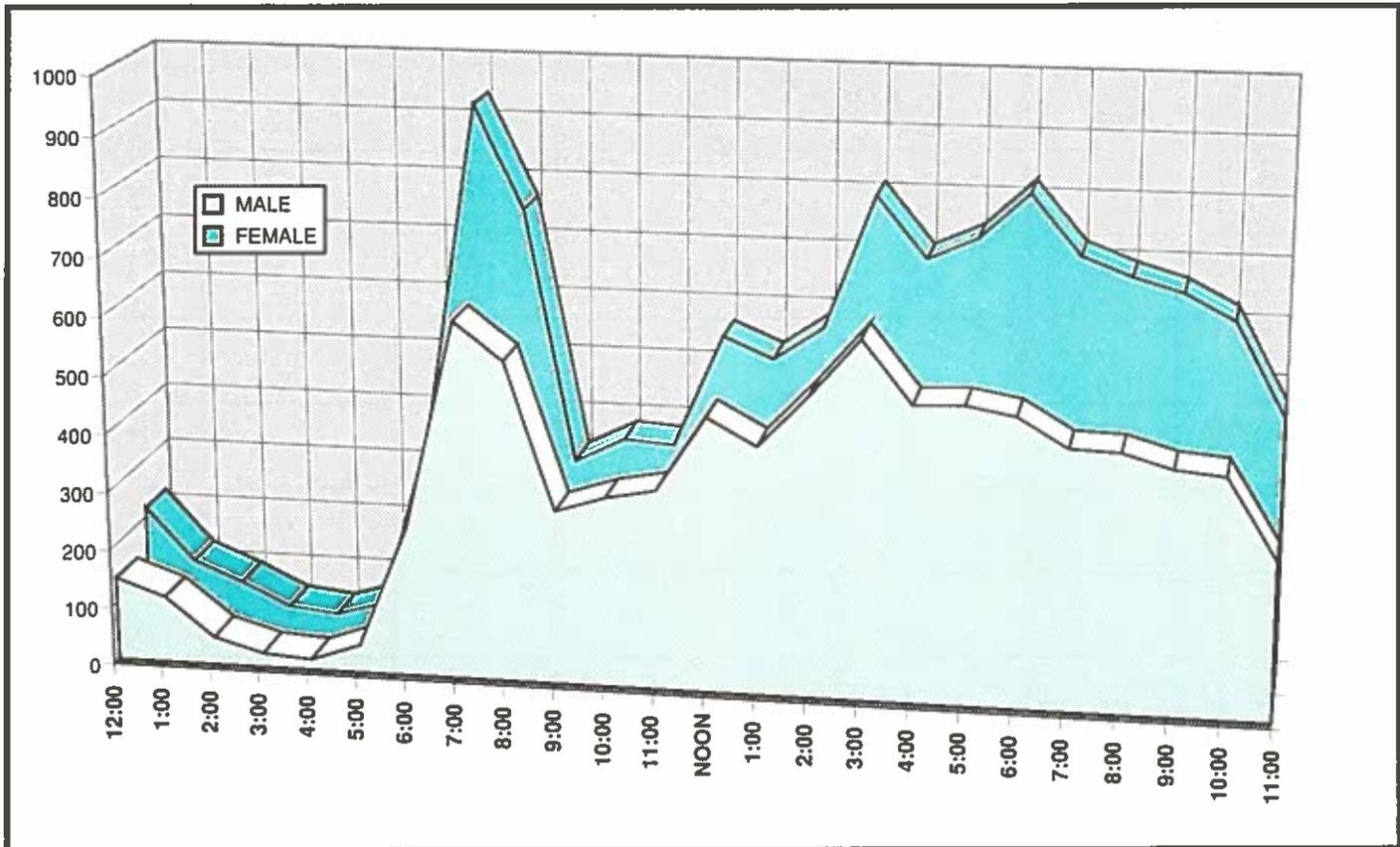
AGE, RACE, AND SEX OF MISSING CHILDREN

More white females between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were reported missing than any other age, gender and race, with 38 percent. Subsequently, white males between the ages of fourteen and sixteen constitute 24 percent of the reported missing children.

AGE & SEX	WHITE	BLACK	NATIVE AMERICAN	ASIAN	UNKNOWN	TOTALS
ONE Females Males	38 18	11 10	0 0	1 0	5 0	55 28
TWO Females Males	15 13	1 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	16 16
THREE Females Males	11 15	3 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	14 15
FOUR Females Males	16 13	1 3	0 1	0 0	0 1	17 18
FIVE Females Males	13 14	0 4	0 0	1 0	0 0	14 18
SIX Females Males	12 11	2 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	14 14
SEVEN Females Males	14 13	1 2	0 0	0 0	1 0	16 15
EIGHT Females Males	17 26	1 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	18 28
NINE Females Males	20 26	1 3	0 0	0 0	0 0	21 29
TEN Females Males	35 51	6 25	0 1	0 0	0 0	41 77
ELEVEN Females Males	90 104	12 21	0 1	0 2	0 1	104 127
TWELVE Females Males	453 394	30 25	6 1	13 6	10 3	512 429
THIRTEEN Females Males	1350 808	120 74	3 11	35 11	22 12	1530 916
FOURTEEN Females Males	2562 1293	144 149	22 4	41 16	21 17	2790 1479
FIFTEEN Females Males	2833 1746	151 151	27 11	35 39	33 19	3079 1966
SIXTEEN Females Males	2112 1721	128 164	18 4	35 37	23 19	2318 1945
SEVENTEEN Females Males	983 1046	98 92	8 0	14 11	11 10	1114 1159
TOTALS	17886	1441	118	297	208	19950

TIME LAST SEEN COUNT

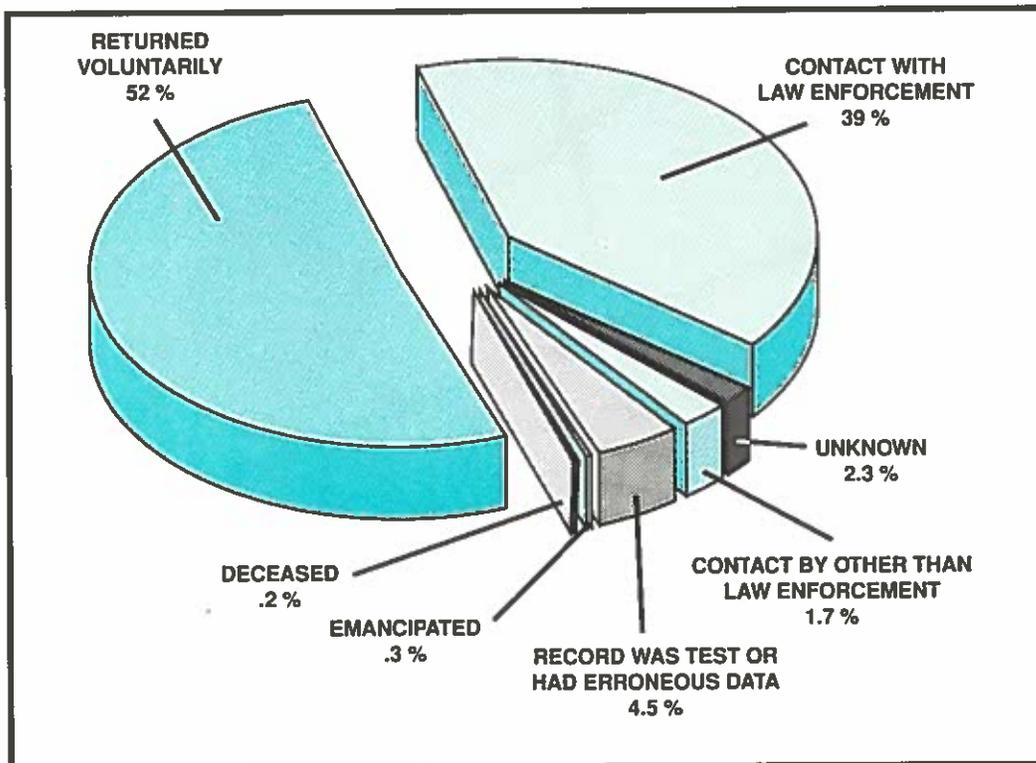
Reports indicate 7:00 a.m. to be the most prevalent time of the day children were last seen, accounting for 8 percent of all reports. It is also the time of day when the most significant difference between genders exists with 325 more females missing than males.



CIRCUMSTANCE OF RECOVERY

Of the cases closed in 1996, 49 percent were resolved when either the child returned or was returned voluntarily. Law enforcement contact was responsible for closing another 39 percent or 7,779 cases.

SEX	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTALS
RETURNED VOLUNTARILY													
Females	508	471	475	477	448	429	476	458	488	561	562	476	5829
Males	309	297	339	353	359	305	313	328	341	422	342	299	4007
CONTACT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT													
Females	324	363	374	392	391	355	355	392	359	453	372	323	4453
Males	247	277	283	292	290	239	257	277	316	327	291	230	3326
CONTACTED BY OTHER THAN LAW ENFORCEMENT													
Females	26	24	34	20	17	28	12	15	14	12	15	17	234
Males	17	11	12	8	16	12	8	7	12	11	7	8	129
UNKNOWN													
Females	32	24	24	22	27	33	9	12	15	24	32	14	268
Males	19	16	14	19	5	13	17	12	12	10	23	14	174
RECORD WAS TEST OR HAD ERRONEOUS DATA													
Females	44	39	42	33	44	44	50	46	46	40	32	37	497
Males	32	27	23	23	17	35	29	32	43	42	43	27	373
DECEASED													
Females	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	7	1	0	13
Males	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	7
EMANCIPATED													
Females	6	2	2	1	0	2	4	1	2	2	2	2	26
Males	1	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	13
TOTALS	1566	1553	1624	1644	1615	1496	1534	1584	1650	1914	1722	1447	19349

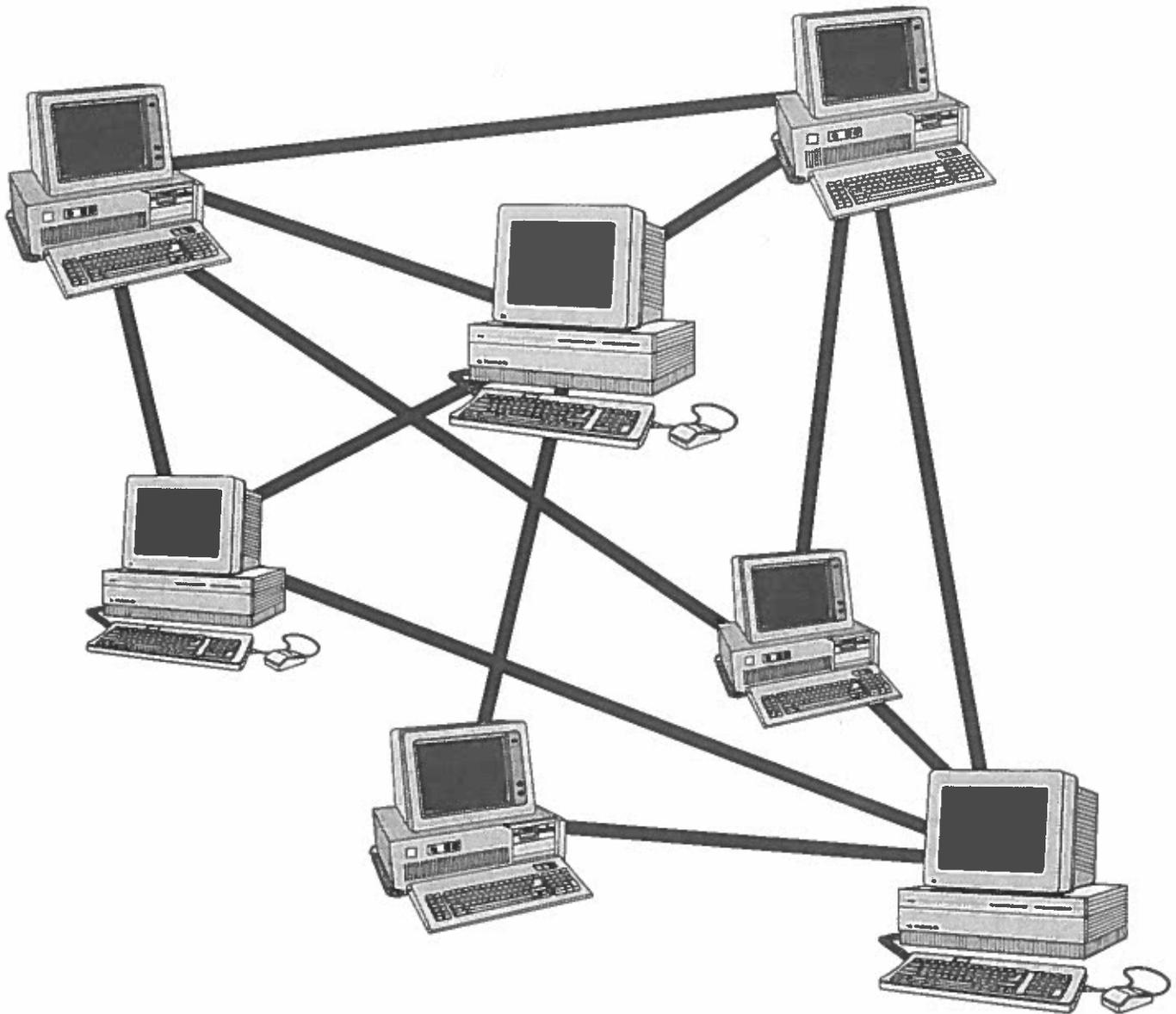


What could be more fun or exciting than surfing the Internet? Many kids of today have the opportunity whether at school or at home to try their hand at "Surfing the net". As many of us know, that also opens the door to independence, learning about things parents might not know about, or maybe even establishing relationships.

In July a missing person report was filed on a 17-year-old girl who had runaway with a boy she had met on the Internet. It has been almost a year since she left home; although, she keeps in touch with her mom and was home for a short visit the relationships with the rest of her family is strained.

The Internet also allowed a 15-year-old boy to find his mother, which he had been taken from 12 years ago. He was living with his father in Texas, and was using a neighbor's computer to visit a chat room. With the help of other people using the chat room he was able to find his way home, and was reunited with his mother just days before the Christmas holiday.

The Internet offers a great deal of positive information; parents need to be aware of how their children are using it, and just what they are accessing. Six states have already taken steps restricting on-line content. A good place for parents to start is by creating ground rules for using the Internet, and purchasing software packages that can block access to certain sites.



In 1993 her non-custodial mother took Kaelyn Handsel at the age of 2. She was recently recovered and is back at home with her father. The letter was received from her father after her return.



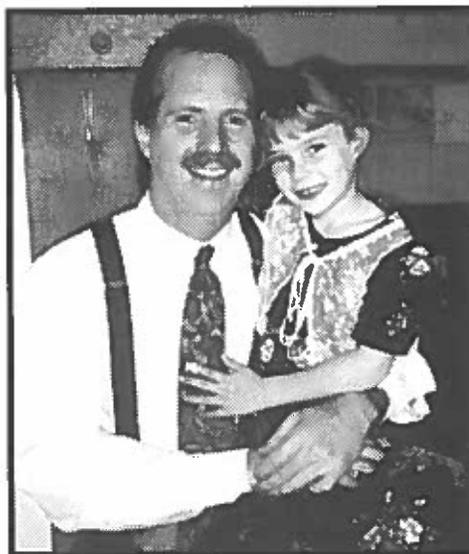
Kaelyn at the time of Her disappearance.

KAELYN IS HOME! Late this year we found Kaelyn with her mother and stepfather in a little town east of Guadalajara. They were dug in living quietly, but openly, all with completely different names. I understand that Kaelyn was on her fourth first and last name by this time. We worked for the remainder of the year on a plan to bring her home. Kaelyn was safely (and happily) returned to the U.S.

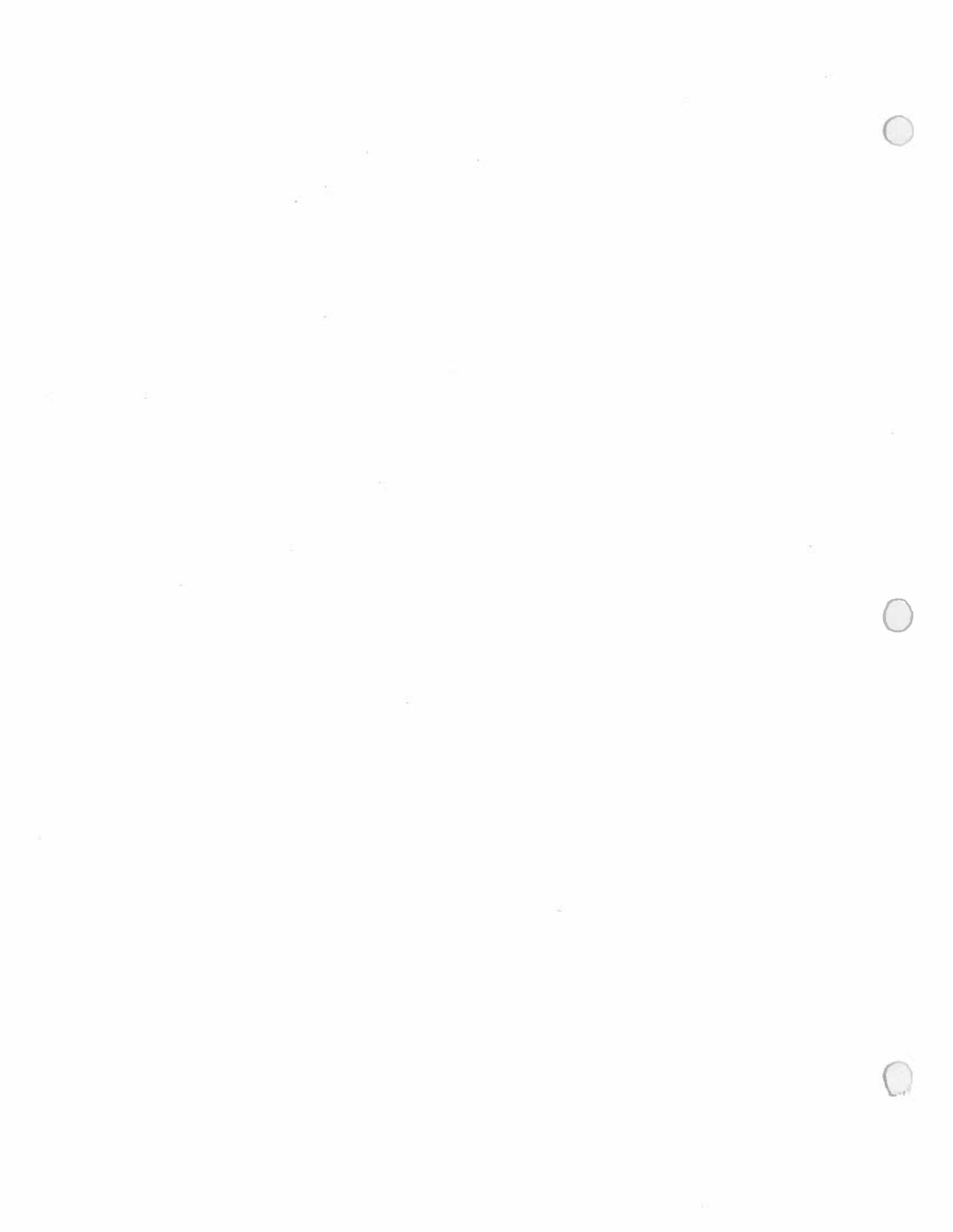
Which brings us to the best part. Kaelyn is doing remarkably well. She was taken from Colorado when she was two years old, and she is now five and a half. The two greatest answers to prayer are that she remembers her Daddy, and that the brain-washing that was attempted did not work! She is confused over some things, as we expected, especially over what everyone's real names are. Even her maternal grandparents and uncles took aliases. Otherwise, we are having a wonderful time together again. My life is now filled with Barbies, coloring books, dress-up, and negotiations of every kind. She is definitely a five-year-old little girl. Since she has been home from Mexico she has had a plethora of "firsts": corn dogs, rootbeer, chocolate shakes, ice skating, the zoo, Disneyland, train crossings, etc. And the best part is that she has been for the most part, cuddly, giggly, and trusting. She loves to be carried everywhere, is respectful of my limit setting, loves to tickle and play hide-and-seek, and likes to be cheek-to-cheek with me when she is feeling unsure. The picture is from our first "Daddy-daughter date", for which she insisted we dress up.

Mother and stepfather have gone back to their real names, mostly, and are still in Mexico. They have been incredibly (and characteristically) slanderous in the media, and we are taking many extra precautions to avoid a re-abduction. Kaelyn is in school and in therapy, and the court is keeping a close watch over her progress. Otherwise, things have been quiet on the legal end.

Thank you for all your love, prayers, thoughts, hopes, and encouragement. As I looked at her sleeping peacefully in the passenger seat during a nighttime trip, I marveled at the hard work and the series of miracles that brought her home. There are times that I feel overwhelmed – I feel more love for her than my body can contain. These times are hard and stressful, but I just cannot express how honored I feel to be living them. Thank you again.



Chris Handsel





If you have information on these or any other missing child, please notify your local law enforcement agency or the Colorado Bureau of Investigation at (303) 239-4222

