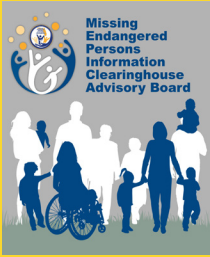


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Florida Missing Endangered Persons Information
Clearinghouse Advisory Board

MISSING & ENDANGERED

NEWSLETTER

FALL / WINTER 2023 / ISSUE 10

FLORIDA MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY EDITION



WHAT IS THE

Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board ?

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board (MEPICAB) was established in 1996 to address issues regarding Florida's missing children. It was later expanded to include missing endangered adults and seniors. The MEPICAB meets quarterly to implement plans and policies that create strategies to raise awareness of the high number of children and endangered adults that go missing every year. The Board's mission is to support awareness, education and training for the prevention, response and recovery of missing and endangered persons.

Board members represent a diverse group of law enforcement officials, government agencies, impacted families, non-profit organizations, private sector partners and community members interested in missing person issues.

Missing & Endangered





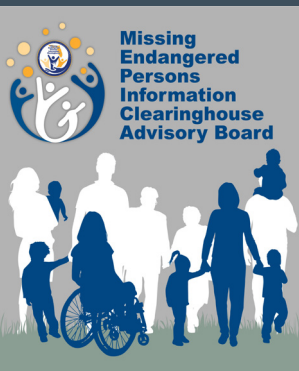
Keith, a 13-year-old, was last seen in the area of Cocoa Beach, Florida. Keith's original missing picture and his age-progressed photo to 56 years old is displayed. Keith's parents dropped him off at his girlfriend's residence after school and he was supposed to be back home for dinner. He never returned on April 22, 1977, and his case remains unsolved. His family still lives in the Cocoa Beach area and is still looking for him 46 years later.

MISSING

Keith Fleming



If you have any information about this case, please contact the Cocoa Beach Police Department at 321-868-3251 or the FDLE MEPIC Hotline at 1-888-FL MISSING (1-888-356-4774).





Missing in Florida

Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis said, “As a parent, I know that there is nothing more terrifying than the thought of your child going missing. Every child in our state should feel safe and protected. Thankfully, Florida has a robust safety network in place to find missing children and return them home quickly and safely. Thank you to FDLE and our dedicated law enforcement personnel statewide for working to protect Florida’s families and children.”

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson said, “On Missing Children’s Day, we grieve with the loved ones who live with the pain every day of not knowing where their child is or if they are safe. As we recognize this day, I want to thank our law enforcement officers and child safety advocates who work tirelessly, never losing hope, to bring these children home to their families.”

In 2022, approximately 28,000 missing children reports were made to Florida law enforcement agencies. FDLE issued 55 Missing Child Alerts and 12 AMBER Alerts statewide. Since MEPIC opened 40 years ago, Florida has activated over 4,400 AMBER, Missing Child, Silver and Purple alerts and more than 1,600 missing persons have been directly recovered through their efforts, roughly 40 every year.

THE FLORIDA ALERT SYSTEM SAVES LIVES

4 AMBER Alerts
issued & 4 resolved

12 Missing Child
Alerts issued & 13
resolved

54 Silver Alerts issued
& 53 resolved

51 Purple Alerts
issued & 51 resolved

Information from July 1, 2023-
September 30, 2023

You can find current
missing person alerts
by visiting [https://
www.fdle.state.
fl.us/mcicsearch/
AllCurrentAlerts.asp](https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/mcicsearch/AllCurrentAlerts.asp)





FDLE Commissioner Mark Glass welcomed guests to the 25th Florida Missing Children's Day Ceremony, held Monday, September 11, 2023, at the Tallahassee Automobile Museum. Commissioner Glass, with the assistance of Attorney General Ashley Moody, formally recognized the families of missing children in Florida and citizens, K-9 trailing teams and law enforcement for their exemplary efforts in missing children investigations.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "It is every parent's worst nightmare to have a child go missing. My heart goes out to every family who has to face this unimaginable pain. As we recognize Missing Children's Day in Florida, I will continue praying for the safe return of those lost and for our law enforcement officers who work tirelessly to reunite families."

2023 Florida Missing Children's Day Award Winners

Commissioner's Award: Ms. Demetris Crump

Ms. Crump, an employee of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), worked two different cases to prevent human trafficking in 2023. The first case involved a missing, homeless 17-year-old minor with a history of being trafficked. The teenager was missing for 14 days and Ms. Crump diligently continued her searches, knocking on doors multiple times a day until the teen was located. The teen was provided services as a victim of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

The second case Ms. Crump worked involved a 15-year-old with a history of drug use who was removed from the home as nearby residents reported the minor was possibly trafficked to obtain illicit substances. The child ran away from placement and reunited with family in an unsafe environment where the child was found actively taking illicit substances. Upon release of medical treatment, the child was placed in a safe environment and assessed for placement with other family members.





John and Revé Walsh Award: Mr. Todd Raleigh

Mr. Raleigh joined DCF 17 years ago. Over the last several years, his efforts in Northwest Florida contributed to a reduced number of runaways from foster care and juvenile pick up orders, from an average of one per week to only two or three per year.

In April 2022, Mr. Raleigh worked a human trafficking case regarding a minor whose mother was trafficking the minor. Mr. Raleigh's hard work resulted in the child being located in another state and safely removed from the mother's custody. Mr. Raleigh has multiple instances of child recoveries similar to the one outlined above.



Evelyn Williams Memorial Award: Ms. Kim Figueroa

Ms. Figueroa, with More Too Life, uses her expertise and knowledge to assist law enforcement agencies with human trafficking cases. She has completed over 120 training hours on human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. In addition, she recently assisted the Pasco County Sheriff's Office in a multi-jurisdictional human trafficking case involving a minor which resulted in the arrest of four individuals. Some of the charges include human trafficking, using a child in sexual performance, transmission of child pornography, and unlawful sex with a minor. The case is still active.



Citizen of the Year Award: Mr. Roy Link

A 2-year-old boy went missing earlier this year from Brooksville, Florida. The child wandered from his home while his family slept. When the family woke up, they realized he was missing and called 911. The child was not located within the first 24 hours despite extensive searching. Mr. Link, a retired Hernando County Parks Department manager and former Marine, joined the search and heard whimpers coming from the woods. He located the child, kept him safe and called 911 to report their location.



Federal/State Law Enforcement Officer of the Year: Deputy Marshal Mario Price

United States Marshals Service Deputy Marshal Price led the investigative and coordination efforts for Operation We Will Find You. The operation resulted in the recovery of 34 missing juveniles from six counties. Deputy Marshal Price also oversaw the recovery of a 13-year-old human trafficking victim who was reported missing earlier this year. Information revealed that the juvenile was in Highlands County with an adult male felon. Through his direct coordination with the Highlands County Sheriff's Office, a traffic stop was conducted leading to the recovery of the child. During a post recovery interview, the child revealed she was being trafficked and forced to work as a prostitute.



Combating Human Trafficking Award: Sergeant David Polce

Sergeant Polce with the North Port Police Department, received a report in May, 2022, of a missing 15-year-old. The juvenile was picked up by an unknown person shortly after running away. Sergeant Polce received information the teenager was possibly heading to New York. As Sergeant Polce continued his investigation, he learned the girl was intentionally misleading those looking for her and was instead still in Florida. He was able to locate the girl in North Miami Beach and bring her home.



Law Enforcement Task Force/ Team of the Year Seminole County Sheriff's Office (SCSO):

Deputy Sheriff Nelson Tai
Deputy Sheriff Daniel Bliss
Detective Eric Phillips
Investigator Teresa Jaap
Susan Malcho

FBI:

Special Agent Rod Hyre
Michelle Thorne
Leslie Santos

Sanford Police Department:

Investigator David Thomas

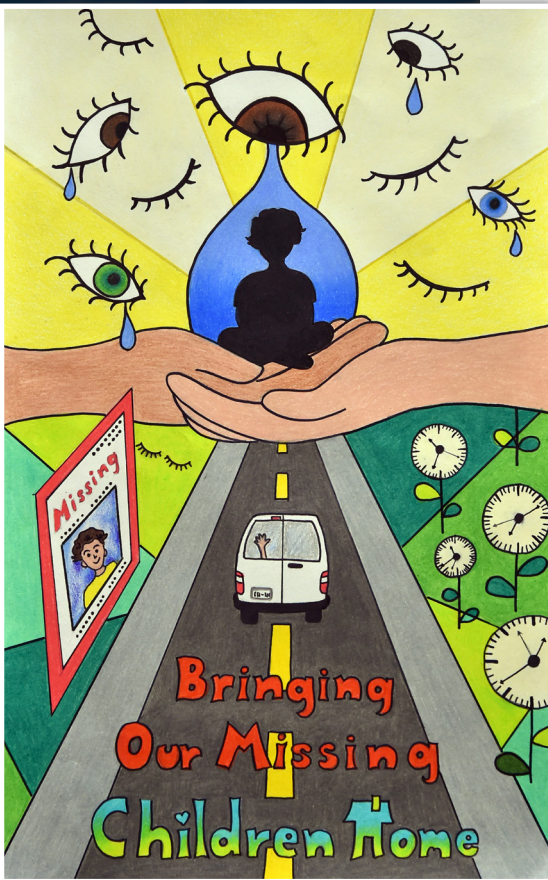
Kids House:

Eunice Carasas-McIntosh

In May 2022, the SCSO received an allegation about children being abused in a foster home. The investigation found evidence of substance abuse, sexual molestation and sexual exploitation by a caregiver. After retrieving evidence from home cameras and electronic devices, 17 foster children, the suspect's ex-stepdaughter and two of her friends were identified as victims. With this dedicated team, the suspect was arrested, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 170 years in prison.

**Local Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award: Detective Roberto Palmer**

Miami-Dade Police Department Detective Palmer led an investigation that began in August of 2022, when a mother reported her 6-year-old son missing after his father failed to return him after a custody visit. Law enforcement discovered a handwritten letter outlining the father's intention to disappear with the child and an AMBER Alert was issued. In September of 2022, law enforcement officers received a lead from Maine that the father and child were in Canada. Detective Palmer traveled to Maine to investigate. With additional information, the father was apprehended in Canada where he confessed his plans to disappear with the child forever. Thanks to Detective Palmer's hard work, dedication, and leadership the child was found safely and returned back to his mother.

**Poster, Essay & National Anthem Contest Winners:**

Florida Missing Children's Day recognizes Florida's 5th grade poster and essay contest winners, Fabian and Isabella. The goal of these contests is to provide teachers, families and communities the opportunity to discuss ways for children to stay safe from abduction. Fabian's poster placed third nationally and is a powerful reminder that even one missing child is too many. Through his art, Fabian asks that we keep our eyes open to every detail, acting fast to find missing children. Isabella's essay highlights several tips to resist and prevent abduction.

Florida Missing Children's Day held their first National Anthem Contest in 2023, where middle schoolers Valentina, Landyn, and Brennan performed the National Anthem at the Tallahassee Automobile Museum. This contest is open to elementary and middle schoolers.

If you have a student interested in participating, please visit the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation at www.fmcd.org to see the related requirements and deadlines.

**School Bus Operator of the Year Award: Ms. Renee Hill**

In September 2022, Ms. Hill, with Brevard Public Schools, was driving her regular bus route when she noticed a 4-year-old child alone along the road. She immediately stopped the bus, directed her assistant to retrieve the child and called dispatch to inform them of the lost child. Ms. Hill and her assistant comforted the lost child while waiting for law enforcement. Because of her quick thinking, the child was safely reunited with his family.



Jimmy Ryce K-9 Trailing Team of the Year: Detective Paul Osborn and K-9 Jon Jon

Earlier this year, Detective Osborn and K-9 Jon Jon, from the Tallahassee Police Department, responded to a call from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office about a missing 4-year-old autistic child. The surrounding area was wooded and marshy. Children with autism have a higher risk of drowning than others when they go missing. K-9 Jon Jon and Detective Osborn arrived on the scene and began an extensive search. After trailing more than a quarter mile into the woods, the child was located standing knee deep in water in good health, avoiding serious injury.



Everyday Hero Award: Ms. Destinee

The Everyday Hero Award is presented to an individual in Florida who works to prevent child endangerment and promote child safety. We are proud to recognize Ms. Destinee this year for her bravery in reporting a dangerous situation at her school. Destinee did what was right when others chose not to. She chose courage and confidence in herself and acted following her beliefs, especially when faced with criticism from her peers. We congratulate Destinee on her courage to act and protect students.

2023 FLORIDA MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

