

FLORIDA MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY EDITION



Florida Missing Children's Day

Florida Missing Children's Day (FMCD) is an annual observance that is held on the second Monday of September to honor the families of missing children as well as law enforcement officers and citizens who have made significant contributions protecting Florida's citizens.

FMCD is supported by the FMCD Foundation which is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization tasked to provide assistance, funding, and promotional support for FMCD activities and education. The event is sponsored entirely on donations from sponsors. Any person, business or agency interested in donating to the Foundation can visit their website at [www.FMCDF.org](http://www.FMCDF.org).



What is the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board (MEPICAB)?

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) MEPICAB was created in 1996 to address issues regarding Florida's missing children. It was expanded to include missing endangered adults and seniors. The MEPICAB meets quarterly to implement plans and policies to combat and create awareness for the large number of children 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 membership includes 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.

THE FLORIDA ALERT SYSTEM SAVES LIVES

**12 AMBER Alerts issued with 12 Recoveries**

**49 Missing Child Alerts issued with 44 Recoveries**

**4 Children were Recovered Deceased**

**251 Silver Alerts issued with 246 Recoveries**

**4 Individuals were Recovered Deceased**

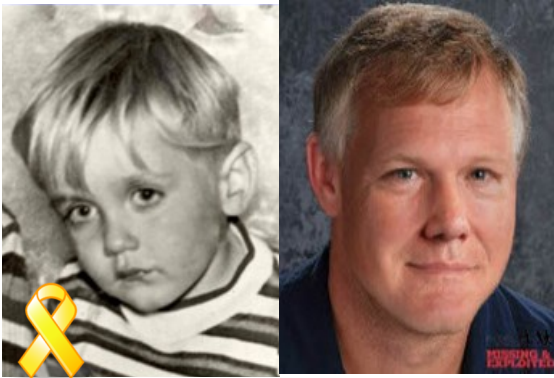
Information from January 1, 2022 - December 1, 2022

\*A subject is recovered when they are located and the alert resolved. You can locate current missing person alerts by visiting FDLE's [Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse](http://Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse).

As of December 1, 2022, the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC) opened 2,858 NEW cases this year and closed 2,848 cases.

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## MISSING SINCE 1968



Jonathan Hagans disappeared on June 11, 1968, at the age of 3 years old, from Jacksonville Beach, Florida. Witnesses report seeing Jonathan walking to a snack bar behind a family member. Family members believe Jonathan was kidnapped outside of the snack bar, however drowning can not be ruled out. The above picture has been age progressed to 51 years. The case remains unsolved. If you have any information about this case, please contact the Jacksonville Beach Police Department at 904-270-1667 or the FDLE MEPIC Hotline at **1-888-FL MISSING (1-888-356-4774)**.

### **Attorney General Ashley Moody states;**

“There is nothing more terrifying for a parent than having a child go missing. Justin and I pray for every parent going through this nightmare and for our law enforcement officers working tirelessly to locate missing children and reunite families.”

### **Former Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried states;**

“To protect children is to protect our future, which is why any time a child goes missing it impacts not only their family, but their entire community. As we remember and pray for the safety of Florida’s missing children, let us rededicate our efforts to raise awareness of abduction prevention and child safety. Today, we also recognize the heroic work of those that protect, rescue, and reunite children with their families. I am so thankful for all our law enforcement officers who serve our communities, helping families during unimaginably difficult times and working tirelessly to bring missing children home safely.”

### **Governor Ron DeSantis states;**

“Every day, we are reminded of how important the mission is of protecting Florida’s children. It is because of the selflessness and heroism of our dedicated law enforcement and first responders that the lives of children and Floridians across the state are saved.”

### **Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis states;**

“As a father of two, the mere thought of a missing child sends chills down my back. It’s a fear that every parent has, and my heart goes out to the families who have experienced this unimaginable tragedy. In Florida, our law enforcement community works around the clock to protect missing and endangered children and ensure they are returned quickly and safely to their families. I’m so grateful for the public servants and law enforcement personnel who have shown extraordinary efforts in protecting Florida’s children, and I’m honored to help highlight the importance of teaching child safety education throughout our state.”

### Purple Alert



Florida’s Purple Alert Plan was established by the Legislature with an effective date of July 1, 2022. The Purple Alert is used to assist in the location of missing adults suffering from a mental or cognitive disability that is not Alzheimer’s disease or a dementia related disorder.

A Purple Alert may be issued for an intellectual disability or developmental disability, a brain injury, other physical, mental, or emotional disabilities that are not related to substance abuse, or a combination of any of these and whose disappearance poses a credible threat of immediate danger or serious bodily harm.

**124 Purple Alerts issued with 117 Recoveries**

**4 Individuals were Recovered Deceased**

**Information from July 1, 2022 - December 1, 2022**

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## Florida Missing Children’s Day

Florida Missing Children’s Day was held on Monday, September 12, 2022 at the Capitol. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s Commissioner J. Mark Glass formally recognized the families of missing children in Florida and citizens, canine trailing teams and law enforcement officers for their exemplary efforts in missing children investigations.

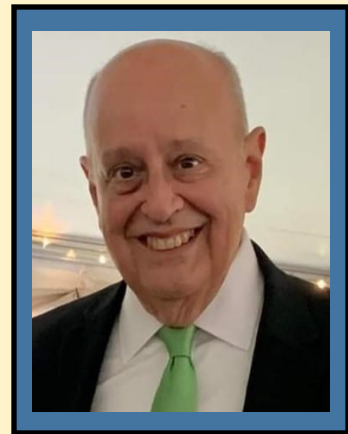
**“Today we honor the memories of the children who have been taken from us and reaffirm our promise that we will never abandon the search for them. I am grateful for our Florida law enforcement community and their dedication to the safety of our children.”**

The individuals in the newsletter are receipts of the 2022 Florida Missing Children’s Day Awards.

### Commissioner’s Award

*Mr. Cass Castillo, Assistant Statewide Prosecutor  
Office of Attorney General Ashley Moody*

When remains are never recovered, cases can be very difficult to prosecute, but where others decline, Cass Castillo meets this challenge head on. Representing lost women and children, his efforts resulted in the successful conviction of two Florida serial killers despite the homicide victims’ remains never being found.



### John and Revé Walsh Award



*Florida Highway Patrol, Troop A  
With special distinction for: Major Warren Fast, Trooper Matthew Davis, Trooper Ethan Ellerbee, Trooper Joe Hardy, Trooper Bruce Ivey, Trooper Ronnie Khune, Trooper Carlos Lopez, Trooper Christopher Maloney, Trooper Jacob Moore, Trooper Williams O’Pry, Trooper Thomas Paschal, Trooper Zachary Steiner, and K-9 Taz*

The Florida Highway Patrol’s Troop A, in the Florida Panhandle, demonstrates outstanding dedication in keeping children safe. From reducing the response time to calls regarding missing and endangered children to off-duty assistance to the direct recovery of missing children and human trafficking victims, Troop A demonstrates a commitment to protecting children and investigating suspects who would do them harm.

In 2021 the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children received more than 17,200 reports of child sex trafficking from all 50 US. States, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. If you believe your child is being trafficked, please contact your local law enforcement agency.

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## Evelyn Williams Memorial Award

*Investigator Kevin Allen  
Alachua County Sheriff's Office*

Kevin Allen investigates missing children and adults, unidentified human remains and unsolved homicides. He was the lead investigator in two cases that resulted in the convictions of two serial killers, one case involving children. He has also spent countless hours working to identify unidentified remains, locating missing persons or their remains, and working leads in multiple cold cases. His efforts contribute greatly to the safety of Florida's children.



## Citizen of the Year Award

*Ms. Robin Hudak, Tampa Bay Regional Communications Center*

In March 2022, the Tampa Bay Regional Communications Center received a phone call regarding a non-custodial parent abducting three children aged 6, 7 and 8 without authorization. When it was discovered the children were on I-75 heading north, Duty Officer Hudak immediately contacted all available units to respond and issued a BOLO.

When the suspect's vehicle left Hudak's jurisdiction, she stayed on the line with the family to assist law enforcement. The suspect and children were located at a Marion County rest area. The children were found safe and the suspect was taken into custody. The entire incident lasted approximately an hour. Hudak's relentless search for information and communication with the custodial parent resulted in a successful recovery.



## Local Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

*Agent Aja Stake, Brevard County Sheriff's Office*

In June 2021, Agent Stake received a cybertip forwarded from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) indicating a Brevard County man was abusing his 5-year-old daughter to produce and share images and videos of child sexual abuse.

Agent Stake immediately determined the child was in a safe location and then obtained the father's confession regarding the sexual abuse and the distribution of child sexual abuse material on social media platforms. Her immediate action resulted in the father's arrest on federal charges within five hours of receiving the tip.



Twenty-five years ago, through the Public Safety Information Act of 1997, Florida became the first state to list sexual predators and offenders online and through a hotline. When passed, Florida had 471 sexual predators and approximately 8,000 sexual offenders. Since that time, that number has grown to nearly 15,000 registered predators and 66,400 registered offenders as of July 2022.

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## Combatting Human Trafficking Award

*Detectives Zoila Exclusa and Ingrid Ruiz  
North Miami Beach Police Department*



On the evening of Saturday, November 27, 2021, Detectives Exclusa and Ruiz were called to investigate a missing 15-year-old female who met someone online. The juvenile left willingly with an unidentified male. The next day, the juvenile called her mother crying before her phone was turned off. The detectives contacted the FBI's Crimes Against Children Task Force, and the child and suspect were located in Pennsylvania. The detectives flew to Pennsylvania to escort the victim back to Florida. They also held a press conference with Spanish media providing a warning to other juveniles and parents about online safety. Without the detectives' investigation and request for FBI intervention, the victim may not have been recovered safely. The juvenile was reunited with her mother within 72 hours of the detectives' involvement.

## Poster Contest Winner: Ms. Hailey

The National Missing Children's day poster contest is sponsored by the United States' Department of Justice. Ms. Hailey was chosen as the Florida statewide winner and the below picture is based on her poster submission. We wish to congratulate Ms. Hailey on her excellent poster. The poster contest generally starts in December and runs into February. If you have a 5th grade student that may be interested in participating, please visit the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation [website](https://www.fmcdf.org).



# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## State Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award



*Trooper David Cox, Florida Highway Patrol*

While patrolling in January 2021, Trooper Cox received a BOLO for a vehicle involved in the abduction of a 5-month-old child. The suspect was reportedly armed and possibly leaving Florida. Trooper Cox located the vehicle at a gas station attempting to refuel. In an unmarked vehicle, he pulled up to the gas pump behind the suspect's vehicle and, using the element of surprise, arrested the suspect. With backup units arriving, Trooper Cox was able to identify a female suspect, and more importantly, the child in an unrestrained car seat. His actions avoided a high-speed car chase and potential injuries to civilians, and the child was recovered safely.

## Essay Contest Winner: Ms. Arie

Florida Missing Children's Day recognizes Florida's 5th grade essay contest winner. This year, Ms. Arie wrote a wonderful essay that highlights the dangers for children in their communities and ways to avoid those dangers. The goal of this contest is to provide teachers, families and communities the opportunity to discuss ways for children to stay safe from abduction. The essay contest generally starts in December and runs into February. If you have a 5th grade student that may be interested in participating, please visit the [Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation website](#).

## Law Enforcement Task Force of the Year Award

*Sergeant Mark Dainty, Detective Joshua Green, Detective Charlotte Hartle, Detective Trent Medley, Detective Jonathan Quintana, Detective Maria Torres, and Sergeant Steven Valk, Polk County Sheriff's Office Task Force*



In September 2021, a Polk County Sheriff's Office investigation revealed two males were sexually abusing their children who were all under the age of 12. The investigation revealed that the mother of one of the children (a daycare worker) was aiding and covering for one of the males. This team's efforts resulted in multiple charges against four people. The two male suspects were arrested for child pornography, lewd or lascivious molestation, capital sexual battery of a child, use of a child in sexual performance, and promoting sexual performance by a child. The victim's mother was charged with aiding the suspect and obstructing the investigation. A local daycare owner where the child victim attended was arrested for accessory after the fact as she provided aid to the suspect to avoid capture by law enforcement.

[National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#) cyber tip line has received over 82 million reports of child sexual abuse material.

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## School Bus Operators of the Year Award



*Ms. Stacey Kelly and Ms. Artavia Mann, Miami-Dade County Schools*

Ms. Kelly finished dropping off her last student for the day on her assigned Miami-Dade County route when she saw a toddler standing alone in the street with no shoes. Ms. Mann stopped the bus immediately and retrieved the child. After parking in a safe location, the two women started looking around for someone that was searching for a toddler. No one was immediately located, and they contacted 911. The street where the child was found was a very busy area for traffic, and the toddler's safety was in jeopardy. These two women ensured the safety of this child.

## Jimmy Ryce K-9 Trailing Team of the Year

*Deputy Jarvey Mesina-Berman and K-9 Ryley, Broward County Sheriff's Office*

Deputy Mesina-Berman and K-9 Ryley responded to a report of a missing juvenile with autism. The team tracked the juvenile for approximately a mile and a half before K-9 Ryley indicated the juvenile turned and crossed an eight-lane roadway with a large center median. The pair continued tracking the child and found the juvenile near an auto repair business. The team displayed outstanding professionalism and tenacity which resulted in the safe recovery of a child with autism.



## Young Hero Award

The Young Hero Award is presented to a child in Florida who displayed extreme bravery to save themselves or a peer from danger. We are proud to recognize Ms. Alyssa for successfully preventing herself from being abducted.

Last May, Alyssa was waiting for her school bus when an adult male approached her at knife point and began to drag her to his vehicle. Alyssa fought back against the suspect causing them to both fall and she was able to escape. Alyssa ran home where her mother immediately called 911. The entire event was caught on surveillance camera.

## FOUND



A child, named Melissa, under two years of age was abducted in Texas approximately 51 years ago. The child, now an adult and living under a different name, was located using a public genetic testing company. Melissa's children submitted their DNA to the company where they were linked to Melissa's biological parents. Melissa was unaware of the connection with her biological parents as the individual who raised her claimed she bought baby Melissa from a bar in 1972 for \$500 dollars.

According to a National Center for Missing & Exploited Children data analysis from 1964 to August 2022 involving 336 infant abduction cases, Florida has approximately 26 infant abduction cases. In 96% of the cases, the abductor was female.