

U.S. Department of Justice
2007 National Missing Children's Day Awards

Attorney General's Special Commendation Award

San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

Det. Christopher Armstrong (Ret.), San Diego Police Department, San Diego, California

SA Aaron Meeks, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, San Diego, California

Sgt. Misty Cedrun, San Diego Police Department, San Diego, California

The San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force identified and arrested Wayne Albert Bleyle, a 54 year-old respiratory therapist employed by the San Diego Children's Hospital in San Diego, California. During the course of the investigation, Bleyle admitted to molesting children in the convalescent ward, which provided long-term care for non-ambulatory and/or non-verbal patients. He was eventually charged with four counts of sexual molestation and possession of child pornography.

National Missing Children's Law Enforcement Award: For the Recovery of Joanna Rogers

Sheriff David Gutierrez, Lubbock, Texas

Captain Antonio Menchaca, Lubbock, Texas

Sheriff David Gutierrez and Captain Antonio Menchaca of the Lubbock County Sheriff's Office in Lubbock, Texas, will be honored for their perseverance, resourcefulness and diligence in locating and retrieving the remains of Joanna Rogers from a Texas landfill. The 16-year-old girl was savagely slain and her body discarded in a dumpster.

2007 AMBER Alert Citizen Award

The McArdle Family, Asheville, North Carolina

On December 29, 2006, the McArdle family of Asheville, NC, was returning from a trip to Florida when they saw AMBER Alert signs in Orlando about a vehicle containing a 16 year-old mother and her 2 year-old son. While driving through South Carolina, Mr. McArdle's attention was drawn to a vehicle with a child moving around in the back seat. Mr. McArdle asked family members if they recalled the description of the vehicle from the Orlando AMBER Alert sign and they soon realized they were following the suspected vehicle. While maintaining a safe distance, they called authorities and the South Carolina Sheriff's Department responded and apprehended the suspect as he pulled the car off to a rest stop. As a result of the diligence of the McArdle family, local law enforcement was able to rescue the mother and child and apprehend the suspect.

2007 AMBER Alert Law Enforcement Award

Sgt. Mark Simpson (Ret.), Arlington, Texas

Sgt. Mark Simpson was an original investigator on the Amber Hagerman homicide investigation. Through his diligence, and collaboration with others the AMBER Alert plan was initiated in late 1996. Since then, Sgt. Simpson has been called upon by numerous agencies and communities to speak about Amber's case and the AMBER Alert plan. Sergeant Simpson's dedication to the Amber Hagerman case continued until he retired. Because of his dedication and drive the national AMBER Alert plan became a reality. This reality has led to the recovery of numerous abducted children.

2007 AMBER Alert Courage Award

Clay Moore, Palmetto, Florida

Clay Moore was abducted at gunpoint on February 23, 2007, from his school bus stop by an unknown male assailant. Clay was standing at his school bus stop with twelve to fifteen other children when he was approached and ordered at gunpoint to get into the suspect's vehicle. The abductor had taken Clay to a wooded area almost 20 miles from where the abduction occurred. The abductor stuffed a sock into Clay's mouth and bound him to a tree secured with duct tape. Clay was able to free himself by using a safety pin to cut through the tape from around his hands. In spite of his ordeal, he was able to give a detailed description of the abductor's vehicle and assist a forensic artist in developing a composite of his abductor. Not only did Clay save his own life, but he continued assisting law enforcement throughout the investigation to identify his abductor.

2007 AMBER Alert Coordinator Award

Paul Murphy, Salt Lake City, Utah

Mr. Murphy has served as the AMBER Alert Coordinator for Utah since its inception and has been the driving force behind it. He developed the program entirely with private funding avoiding any mandated or restrictive legislation. Mr. Murphy developed the Endangered Person Advisory to be used for those individuals of any age who do not qualify for an AMBER Alert. He works tirelessly to promote the program to ensure that it works without taking credit for its success, yet will take responsibility for problems. In 2006 at the national conference while making a presentation on the Endangered Person Advisory he was coordinating an alert that began shortly before he began his presentation. During the week he was constantly in touch with the police for updates offering assistance. Upon his return to Salt Lake he went to the police agency involved and stayed with them until the conclusion of the incident.

2007 AMBER Alert Media Award

Robert Fisher, Las Vegas, Nevada

Robert Fisher has been a tireless crusader for AMBER within Nevada and nationwide through the National Broadcasters. He is one of only two broadcasters to serve as a State AMBER Alert Coordinator. Bob is the architect of Nevada's AMBER Alert Plan and has a real passion for his role with AMBER as well as a broadcaster. At any AMBER training, conference and/or meeting that Bob attends, he is always vocal on behalf of media/broadcasters while continuing to be passionate about the AMBER Alert Program. Bob does a weekly broadcast, publishes a monthly newsletter and writes numerous news articles and throughout them all he provides the latest AMBER news and promotes AMBER Alert to the media, community leaders, and AMBER Alert partners all over the country as well as the community at large.

2007 AMBER Alert Transportation Award

Todd Kramasz, Roseville, Minnesota

On February 11, 2007, 14 year-old Deidre Michuda was taken from her home by her non-custodial father, who had been convicted of sexual molestation and was prohibited from having unsupervised contact with Deidre. An AMBER Alert was activated and continued throughout the evening and overnight. The road signs that had been activated due to the Alert had expired. However, Todd Kramasz of the Minnesota Department of Transportation made the decision to reactivate all of the MN highway signs during rush hour the following morning. A driver noticed the sign, and recognized the vehicle as the one he had purchased just the night before from a man and child, who indicated they were taking a bus to their next destination. This individual contacted authorities and the child and suspect were later located at a bus stop near the Mall of America. As a result of Mr. Kramasz's actions, Deidre Michuda was located and safely returned home.

2007 Missing Child Non-Profit Organization of the Year Award

Nevada Child Seekers, Las Vegas, Nevada

Nevada Child Seekers was created in 1985 by community leaders to address the plight of missing children in Nevada. The organization's mission is to assist in locating and advocating on behalf of missing, abducted and runaway children. Nevada Child Seekers is the only non-profit organization in the state that provides case management, abduction prevention education, family support group, after-care and counseling referrals, NetSmartz - Internet Safety education, and a Child ID & fingerprint program. Nevada Child Seekers works in partnership with AMECO member non-profit organizations to aid in the search for missing children from our state as well as around the country; and partnered with school districts to expand prevention education, corporate and community based organizations to assist with searches and education.

2007 Missing Children State Clearinghouse Coordinator of the Year Award

Susan A. Whitehorse, Wisconsin

On March 27, 2006, the first Crimes Against Children in Indian Country Conference opened in Onalaska, Wisconsin. This first of its kind event was the direct result of the vision, dedication, and considerable efforts on the part of Susan A. Whitehorse. The overwhelming success of this initial conference resulted in a second conference that took place in March of 2007. Plans are already being made for the 2008 Crimes Against Children Conference. Further, Susan provides outstanding training programs to individual tribal communities on missing and exploited children. Susan has been a leader not only in Wisconsin but nationally in the training of tribal law enforcement and tribal communities on the subject of missing and exploited children.

2007 National Missing Children's Day Art Contest Winner

Rachel Stevenson, Saint Mary's School, Elyria, Ohio

Miss Stevenson, a fifth grade student, was selected from hundreds of entries. Her winning drawing will be on display at the Department of Justice ceremony and will be featured in missing children-related publications and conferences.

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