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CITY OF BRANSON

110 W. Maddux
Branson, MO 65616
417-334-3345
Public Information Department
jadams@cityofbranson.org

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Contacts: Caroll McCullough, police chief, 334-3300
Cpl Matt Gregory, police department, 334-3300.

Branson police set up local child alert system

System will complement nationwide Amber Alerts

The most important action that can be taken immediately following a child abduction is circulating vital information to the public that could help citizens in spotting the persons involved and notifying authorities. That's why the nationwide Amber Alert system was established a few years ago.

Now, the Branson Police Department has set up a local notification system that operates hand-in-hand with the national Amber Alert and works in a similar fashion. It's called the "Abduction Child Alert" (A.C.A.) system.

A.C.A. is different because it's designed to specifically alert those who have chosen to participate in this program within a 100-mile radius of Branson, according to Police Chief Caroll McCullough.

McCullough said in the event of an abduction, important information such as vehicle description, direction of travel, and descriptions of the child and abductor will be transmitted electronically from his department to individuals or organizations that choose to be on the A.C.A. list. The information can be sent by e-mail, fax and/or pager depending on the contact methods specified by each participant in the system.

"With more people within a closer area of the abduction receiving this timely information, the greater the chances authorities have in locating the missing child," said McCullough. "We're actually supplementing the nationwide Amber Alert system."

McCullough credits Corporal Matt Gregory, the department's DARE officer, in setting up a convenient means to build a database for the Abduction Child Alert system. The police department obtained the A.C.A. software program from the national Child Alert Foundation, a non-profit organization that assists authorities in recovering abducted children.

“In working closely with children and their parents in the popular DARE program at local schools, Matt realized the importance of expanding the local alert system to better serve our community and protect our children,” said McCullough.

To participate in the A.C.A. system and be eligible to receive abduction alerts, citizens need to complete a Participant Contact Information form. The forms are available at the Branson Police Department at City Hall or on the police department’s web page in the city of Branson website, www.cityofbranson.org.

McCullough said the information provided by participants would be used only to contact them with abduction alerts and not shared with any third party.

“We would like to encourage as many area citizens, businesses and organizations as possible to be a part of our alert system. During a search for a child, timely information is critical. It’s exceedingly helpful to have our community assisting officers in finding kidnapped and missing children,” said McCullough.

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