

A mile a minute....  
that is how fast

## A MESSAGE FROM MARC



**W**e don't have to look any farther than *People* magazine to realize that 2009 has been an extraordinary year for missing persons. Between October 9 and November 12, no fewer than eight missing children and adults have been featured on its cover. In addition, eight-year-old Sandra Cantu was allegedly murdered

by a female pedophile, and five-year-old Shaniya Davis was a victim of human trafficking: sold into sexual servitude by her own mother.

This is not due to a sudden outburst of offenses against children, but rather to the fact that such cases garner far more public attention than they used to. Over the past 16 years, the KlaasKids Foundation has worked to raise the profile of such cases, supporting legislation that has impacted the prevention, capture, and punishment of many crimes. We have fought long and hard for criminal and governmental accountability, better tools for law enforcement, innovations in technology, and public education and awareness.

In the early 1990s, when Jaycee Dugard and Polly Klaas were kidnapped, the system broke down on a regular basis. There were very few resources to protect children, let alone recover those who had been kidnapped or abused. Law enforcement agencies didn't have kidnap protocols and in many cases weren't even communicating with each other. Government protected and coddled criminals and ignored the plight of children. Flyer creation and distribution technology hadn't changed in nearly 100 years; indeed, the same technology used to create and distribute the first missing child

flyer remained the status quo. Failure after failure resulted in the death or permanent disappearance of our children.

In response, the Foundation successfully advocated for Megan's Law, which provides for sex offender registration and community notification, assists law enforcement in investigations, establishes legal grounds to hold known offenders, deters sex offenders from committing new offenses, and offers citizens information they can use to protect children from victimization.

In 2002, BeyondMissing.org, with the support of the Foundation, proved that the Internet can distribute flyers faster than previously imagined simply by utilizing existing technologies. That enabled critical and targeted image distribution that has helped to recover hundreds of children quickly and cost-effectively.

The Foundation has also supported the development of Child Protection Kits, which allow parents to collect pictures, DNA, and other information that can be vital to police during the first few hours of a kidnap. Since 1994, we have distributed more than 1,000,000 kits at no cost to parents.

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## A MESSAGE FROM MARC

I stood next to President Clinton when he signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Among other things, that legislation provided for 100,000 new police officers; \$9.7 billion in funding for prisons in states that adopted truth-in-sentencing; and \$6.1 billion in funding for prevention programs for at-risk youth. The Foundation fought hard for the PROTECT Act that allows law enforcement to arrest and prosecute known online child porn purveyors; and the Adam Walsh Child Protection Act which, if it is ever fully funded, will upgrade, streamline, and synchronize America's online sex offender registries. We stood side by side with Mark Lunsford to enact Jessica's Law, mandating lifetime GPS monitoring for sexual predators.

Beginning in 1997, the KlaasKids Foundation advocated for establishing the Amber Alert, a national warning system that warns citizens to look out for kidnapper vehicles via radio, TV, and highway signage, which is currently credited for the recovery of 492 kidnap victims. If this system had existed in the 1990s, I have no doubt that Jaycee Dugard would have been rescued within hours, because there are only two roads out of South Lake Tahoe, CA. Unfortunately, rescue took 18 years.

These are significant successes. However, there is still much work to do. Legislation that we are currently campaigning for in some cases would have prevented many of this year's crimes all together. For example, the kidnapper of Jaycee Dugard was a known threat to society. In 1976, he was sentenced to 50 years in Nevada prison and a life sentence in federal prison for kidnap and rape, yet he had been paroled in time to snatch Jaycee from a bus stop near her home. The truth-in-sentencing laws that we have advocated for years would ensure that her kidnapper would still be in prison for his previous crimes.

The time that has passed since this kidnapping also means that the statute of limitations has run out on crimes Philip Garrido committed against Ms. Dugard in 1991. As we noted in our last edition, in California, the Statute of Limitations gives adult victims of sexual assault just ten years to have charges brought against their attacker. A bill is currently in committee that would drop the Statute of Limitations for sex crimes, and the Foundation is working actively to get this passed into law in time to help the next Jaycee Dugard.

As well, the Foundation has long advocated for policy changes in America's approach to human trafficking that reflect Shaniya Davis tragedy. Our field work on this issue has reaffirmed our long-held belief that America is indeed supplying its own demand for child and teenage prostitutes.

It is time that we take bold steps to once again raise the bar. Not the mimicking of existing programs or the rehashing of existing technology, but actual new solutions. In this issue, we introduce an audacious new program that supports a unified army of first responders to be on the lookout for missing persons, young and old—one that won't cost the government one red cent. It will also provide for the first missing persons television station with a captive audience of more than 2,000,000. Read all about Trucker TV on page 4.

Please join the KlaasKids Foundation as we move into the new year. Your participation and financial support make all the difference to the work of helping to assure the safety and security of our children. While we have made good progress on many fronts, the year of 2009 provides an object lesson in how much still remains to be done. ■

## MISSION POSSIBLE: THE DRAMATIC STORY OF BABY SHANNON



From left to right: K-9 Max, Capt. Greg Cole of Gulf County Sheriff's Office, K-9 Jacob, Tammy Dennis (KlaasKids K-9 Handler) with Baby Shannon, K-9 Charity, Brad Dennis (KlaasKids Search Director) and K-9 Chance

**W**hen the KlaasKids Foundation's search team received the call to assist in the search for seven-month-old Shannon Dedrick of Chipley, Florida, it seemed like a storyline from the old TV show *Mission: Impossible*. There had been no sign of the child for two days despite the efforts of hundreds of investigators and searchers. Thick woods, swamps, coyotes, and wild pigs all conjured up terrible images in the searchers' minds.

KlaasKids deployed its search director, two of its K-9 teams, and brought in six additional K-9 teams and ground searchers from partner agencies. The assignment: search the woods surrounding Baby Shannon's house. Led and assisted by Wewahitchika and Bay County Search and Rescue teams, volunteers scoured the woods for three days searching for any sign of Baby Shannon. Despite the thick, debris-laden

woods, and swampy conditions, they covered the assigned areas with such detail it allowed the investigators to look at other possibilities for the baby's disappearance.

One such direction soon led to Susan Baker, the child's babysitter. Washington County Sheriff Bobby Haddock had initially stated there was no sign of abduction, but also no chance little Shannon could leave on her own.

Susan and her husband, James Baker, were previously suspects in the 1987 disappearance of toddler Paul Baker, whom Susan Baker claimed had vanished while he slept. Susan Baker had already been charged for beating the six-year-old sister of Paul, the missing boy. She was sentenced to ten years in prison for assault and aggravated battery, but a judge suspended the sentence to the 80 days that she had already served. In 2000,

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# TRUCKERS CAN AID IN FINDING MISSING KIDS WITH YOUR HELP



**F**or the last three years, the KlaasKids Foundation has been aggressively participating in a case at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in Washington, DC.

KlaasKids wants the FCC to approve a proposal that will unleash major resources for the cause to recover missing children and adults at no cost to government. The case has suffered from prolonged delays, and we need your voice to arouse the FCC from its slumber and jar it to action.

The proposal we support has been made to the FCC by Clarity Media Systems, LLC, a subsidiary of Flying J Inc., the company that owns and operates hundreds of Flying J travel plazas across the country's highways. The U.S. Department of Transportation requires America's two million long haul truck drivers to spend ten

hours or more per day resting. Flying J provides a variety of vital services to these truckers, making it a popular and viable rest destination.

However, one service that truck drivers have never been able to

access is basic television. Clarity has proposed to provide 70 channels of television programming, including local stations, national cable and satellite channels, and its own specially originated program channels to entertain and inform truckers during federally mandated rest stops.

Clarity's proposal enables these drivers—who are out on the roads and at highway rest stops, convenience stores, gas stations, and fast food restaurants where persons on the run frequently go—to receive news flashes, special reports, and full-length programming about unresolved missing person cases from local television stations, national cable and satellite channels, and Clarity channels. In other words, two million new pairs of eyes would be enabled to immediately respond to news that a person is missing, and help to seek them out.

Specifically, Clarity proposes to originate a special Public Safety and Alert channel that will focus on the plights of missing persons. With the assistance of the KlaasKids Foundation, programming is produced to highlight high-profile cases such as the disappearance of Morgan Harrington from a concert at Virginia Tech on October 20, as well as low profile cases that failed to receive media attention and missing adults excluded by their age from the Amber Alert system. Clarity will make this special channel the default channel that every truck driver sees when he turns on the television set while at rest in his cab and that plays continuously in the common areas of the highway travel plazas.

We at the Foundation know firsthand the valuable role that informed long haul drivers can play in fulfilling our mission to recover missing persons. When Polly Klaas was abducted, this community made a point to circulate her poster broadly in the hope that she could be recovered.

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## MISSION POSSIBLE: THE DRAMATIC STORY OF BABY SHANNON

Susan and James Baker were extradited to South Carolina from Chipley and charged in Paul's disappearance. The couple was taken before a grand jury, but no indictment was issued. The Bakers then moved back to Florida.

Five days into the search for baby Shannon, investigators armed with information from South Carolina, witness reports and other leads, obtained consent to search the property of Susan and James Baker. KlaasKids K-9 teams along with K-9s from the Gulf County Sheriff's office searched the property while crime scene investigators searched the home. It was during the search of the house that investigators uncovered the bizarre twist to this made-for-TV reality scenario: Baby Shannon was alive and had been hidden in a two-by-three-foot cedar box shoved under the Bakers' bed.

The baby was taken to Northwest Florida Community Hospital that night, November 4,

where she was evaluated and released into state custody. Susan Baker, along with the baby's mother, Crystina Lynn Mercer, were charged in connection with the baby's disappearance.

The overall response to Baby Shannon's case was another superb example of the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) concept, founded by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and modeled throughout the country. The CART creator, Jay Etheridge, now the Regional Special Agent in Charge, led the FDLE response that brought investigators and search crews from surrounding counties to assist. **Special thanks** go to the Gulf County Sheriff's Office, Southwest Panhandle K-9/EFA Search Team, Gulf Coast Search and Recovery K-9s, Southeastern K-9 Search and Rescue, and Global Child Rescue for answering our call for assistance. ■

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## TRUCKERS CAN AID IN FINDING MISSING KIDS WITH YOUR HELP

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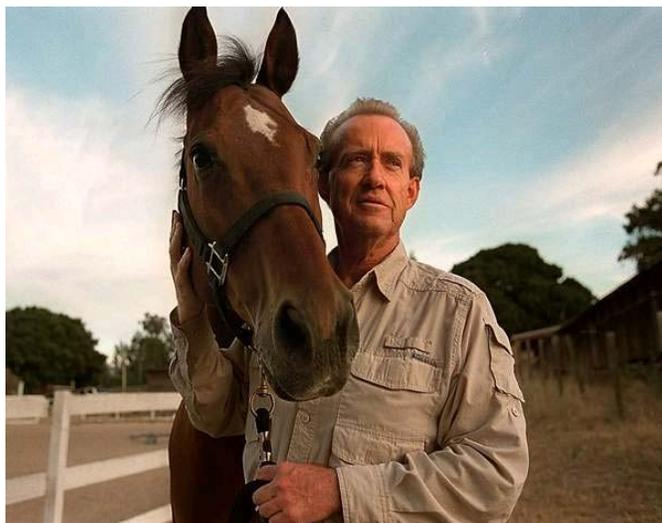
Had the service that Clarity proposes been available when Morgan Harrington disappeared from a rock concert, tens of thousands of drivers in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, DC, Maryland, and other surrounding or regional states could have been alerted and on the lookout for her immediately following her abduction. Instead, her whereabouts remain unknown without this effort even being made. There are thousands of similar examples.

With Clarity's programming in the cabs of their trucks and at rest stops during government-mandated rest periods, professional long-haul drivers can become an army of law enforcement-

minded first responders to disseminate vital information to their colleagues, apprehend abductors, and recover the missing.

Please add your voice to the wake-up call that we will soon be sending to the FCC demanding that it stop sitting on this important case and approve Clarity's proposal. Please log onto [www.klaaskids.org](http://www.klaaskids.org), select Trucker TV/Call to Action, select the Reply button, and type in your own words the reasons why it is important for the FCC to act immediately to make this public safety service a reality. We will bring your input to the direct attention of the FCC Chairman and Commissioners immediately. ■

## REMEMBERING CHIEF OF POLICE DENNIS DEWITT



Former Petaluma Chief of Police,  
Dennis Dewitt

**T**he community lost a good friend and law enforcement leader recently when Dennis Dewitt passed away at his San Diego home on November 21. Dennis was Chief of Police for the Petaluma Police Department when Polly Klaas was kidnapped from her home on October 1, 1993.

Dennis immediately found himself in the most unenviable of positions — serving as Chief of Police for a small town that was overwhelmed by FBI agents. Instead of bending to the pressure of potential heavy-handedness from federal agents, Dennis ensured that the lines between agencies did not obscure the goal of finding Polly. He willingly reached out to any and all who could help bring her home. Eventually it was one of his officers who got the confession that allowed us to bring Polly home.

As for many of us, the search for Polly weighed heavily on Dennis. He slept little, ate less, and cried with us when we learned of Polly's fate. He worked with me to make sure that Secret Service and other law enforcement agencies were not conspicuous during Polly's Memorial service at St. Vincent's Church in

Petaluma, despite the fact that a high level of security was necessary to protect the dignitaries in attendance.

At the start of his career, Dennis had been one of 15 Petaluma officers. As Chief, he supervised 92 employees, including 63 officers. Throughout his tenure, from his days as a patrolman in the late 1960s through his retirement as Chief in 1997, Dennis demanded and delivered a high level of accomplishment and professionalism. Former and current officers still remember his positive demeanor and open-door policy.

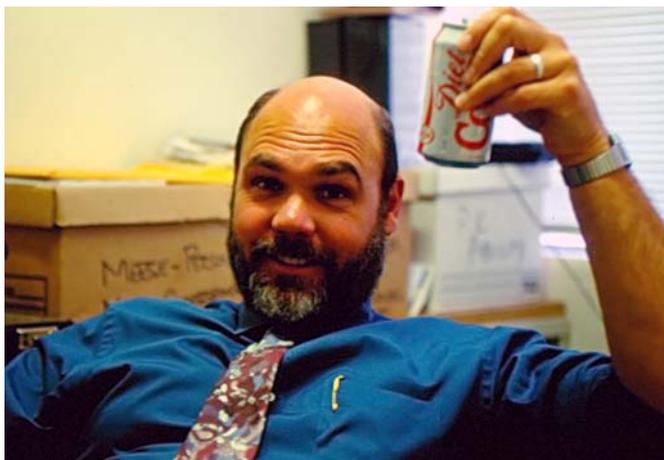
"One of the best things to ever happen to me was becoming a police officer," Dennis told a reporter from the local *Press Democrat* when he retired. He also remained active with The Shelterless, the Elks, and the Petaluma Boys and Girls Club.

Dennis DeWitt truly was one of the good guys. I'm glad that I had an opportunity to know him and call him my friend. Polly's case took a very real and personal toll on him, and I know that Polly never left his memory even years after he had retired from the Petaluma Police force and moved to San Diego. When I last spoke with Dennis last year, the first thing he asked me was, "How is Marc doing?" Dennis was diagnosed with melanoma a few years ago. The cancer recently was found to have spread to his brain and lungs.

Chief DeWitt is survived by his wife, Billie Jean, as well as his sons, Vance, Ryan and Kyle, daughter Michael Ann, sister Cheryl, brother Donald, half-brother Kim, stepmother Rama, and seven grandchildren. ■

*Barry Blansett was publisher of the Petaluma Argus Courier 1991-1995, and the Novato Advance 2004-2005*

## REMEMBERING MIKE MEESE



Mike Meese waiting for the sentencing verdict of Polly's killer -  
September 1996

**T**he long journey of life necessarily distills or dilutes our experiences through the filter of memory, until only those moments or individuals who truly leave their indelible mark upon our souls remain. I believe that is why it is not often that one is able to pinpoint the exact moment when an important person enters and helps to shape one's life in a positive and personal way. It is a phenomenon that occurs when we meet our spouses (assuming that we choose well and don't marry too often) and when our children are born.

Ironically, such a moment occurred for me and my family near the time that my daughter died; when Mike Meese, an on-duty Petaluma police sergeant, answered the desperate 911 call reporting Polly's late-night abduction on October 1, 1993. However, the clock was ticking too quickly and the implications were too overwhelming for anyone to reflect beyond the task at hand. In the final analysis, it was our personal histories that revealed that it was that moment that linked our lives.

It was in retrospect, as I pieced together the mosaic of those 64-days, that the image of this gentle giant began to emerge. As the Petaluma

PD's lead detective on the case, Mike was always moving on to the next interview, or following the next lead as he purposefully pursued Polly and her tormentor.

However, those moments that he was willing to share were neither idle nor wasted. Instead, they were quiet, personal reflections designed to inspire a father practically paralyzed by fear. He would envelop my hands in his, look me right in the eye and promise that he would find my daughter. He would encourage me to stay strong, because every day brought us closer to a resolution in the case. Or, he would simply smother me in the iron grip of his bear hug that would bolster my failing spirit as it propped up my faltering frame. He had placed an awesome responsibility on his powerful shoulders, and his actions and words belied a quiet yet inspiring confidence. He was the Energizer Bunny in a size 44-suit.

He delivered on his promise two months later. Over the course of long hours of videotaped interrogation, his sly intelligence wound its way through self-serving testimony as he out-manuevered a master manipulator until finally, for the price of fast food and a pack of cigarettes, he was able to bring Polly home so that her family could provide her with a final resting place. The only interrogation methods that Mike required to achieve critical results were a sound technique based on lifetime of training and keen intelligence.

Mike was a constant presence throughout the case. At Polly's memorial service, he whispered in my ear, "They can't hurt her anymore. She now sits at the right hand of God." At the trial, Mike told me not to worry, because her killer would "get the justice he deserves." As the final judgment was delivered, he joined as my family

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# PROTECT YOUR CHILD ONLINE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



## McGruff SAFEGUARD

Take a bite out of Internet danger

**T**his holiday season, tens of millions of American teenagers and young children will take some much-needed rest from school and enjoy a short vacation. It's supposed to be a time to relax, enjoy family, and reflect on the blessings of the year past. But one place where millions of children will go this season has some not-so-festive dangers lurking: online.

The number of children who go online and the time that they spend there grows every year. Unencumbered by homework, early bedtimes, and other responsibilities, many children and teenagers will spend countless hours on the Internet this holiday season.

Two primary dangers face your child on the Internet. First, their virtual behavior can place them in harm's way. Friending without discretion on social media sites, disclosing personal information, even engaging in what they believe to be good-natured fun, can all land children in dangerous situations. Secondly, your child may fall victim to online predators that use deceptive methods to gain and then exploit their trust.

Since there is no way to continuously oversee your kid's online activity, what is a parent to do? To help you get started, we have supplied some easy-to-implement suggestions following the

acronym P.A.R.E.N.T. to get you involved immediately in your child's life online:

1. **Participate:** Help shape your children's Internet habits early. Ideally, your teenagers won't remember the day Mom and Dad made rules for the Internet. It becomes as natural and beneficial for your children to grow up with Internet guidelines as having a bedtime or curfew.
2. **Assess:** If you think that you're too old or simply uninterested in using the social networking websites that your children use, you're missing the point. You weren't too old to play peek-a-boo with your toddler, so why disengage now?
3. **Review:** What devices besides the family computer give your kids Internet access? Do they have a laptop computer, smart phone, or a library card? Do they go online at school or at their friend's homes? Where is the family PC located? You cannot effectively monitor all of these devices, but you can have an ongoing discussion about Internet safety.
4. **Educate:** You may not be a computer whiz, but you know what is appropriate and what is not. Create guidelines for your children and clearly communicate what is expected. Teach

your children the dangers that exist so they can appreciate the protection you provide.

5. **Negotiate:** Work with your children to create rules designed

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## REMEMBERING MIKE MEESE

celebrated release from the tyranny of evil. Perhaps it was then that I realized that Mike Meese was, for me, larger than life. He had evolved from cop to promise keeper. He had found my daughter and helped to deliver justice.

As our friendship matured, Mike revealed different facets of his personality. He restlessly moved from job to job and place to place, chasing a dream that only he could see. He talked about his sons, Todd and Frank, with obvious pride in their achievements and concern about their futures. When he spoke of Victoria, the granddaughter he had raised from infancy, anybody with eyes and ears could tell that he had surrendered his heart. With devotion in his voice he told me that, "Victoria is an angel." After he married his wife, Michelle, he confided to me that, "Her pie is to die for," as he rubbed his ample belly and smiled broadly.

Finally, in 2006, Santa Rosa Junior College hired him as a full-time instructor for the

administration of justice. The last time I saw Mike was at the college that had shown him his true calling, mere weeks before he learned that he was dying. Before we visited his class, he bought dinner for Violet and I, during which he reflected on his life and times. I believe that he had finally discovered the holy grail of personal contentment and professional satisfaction. He had lost his heart to a little girl and was sharing his lifetime of accomplishment and knowledge with his students.

I can no longer think of Mike Meese as larger than life, because he died of complications from pancreatic cancer on Monday, November 23, 2009. Instead I remember the strong, dignified, and decent man who has now journeyed to his final resting place. I have no doubt that when he arrived he was greeted with love and devotion as he took his place at the right hand of God. ■

## PROTECT YOUR CHILD ONLINE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

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for their safety and maximum enjoyment. As children, we were taught not to jump on the bed, not for restriction sake, but to prevent painful experience while we played. The same is true for your child's life online.

6. Track: We know that you cannot monitor all online activity, but that shouldn't stop you from being diligent whenever possible. There are a variety of monitoring tools available that allow parents to discreetly monitor their kid's online activity. In the final analysis, this is analogous to watching what your children do in your back yard or in the house—so that you can enforce the rules that you have set.

Parents interested in implementing these ideas may benefit from monitoring software such as McGruff Safeguard, which is available for FREE to all parents and caregivers at [www.gomcgruff.com](http://www.gomcgruff.com). McGruff Safeguard offers parents the ability to filter Internet content to age-appropriate levels for their children. In addition, parents can monitor their children online by accessing real-time activity reports remotely, receiving daily activity reports, and even receiving instant alerts of dangerous activity via text messaging. ■

*Ellen Ohlenbusch is President & COO,  
McGruff SafeGuard*

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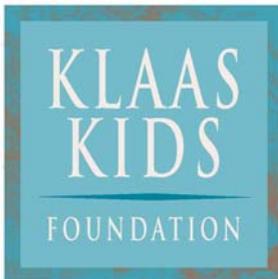
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