

FIGHT BACK: SAFEGUARD YOUR COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

People feel powerless to affect the system and this misconception is understandable given the global nature of the problems facing us as a country. However, by focusing our efforts, citizens and organizations can form partnerships that positively and proactively impact individual communities.

No idea is so large that each and every one of us cannot embrace it. Individually, none of us has the power to effect profound change. But, by reaching out and linking arms, together, we can change the world.

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COMMUNITY BASED SOLUTIONS

The term “It takes a village to raise a child” is cliché. However, no truer words were ever spoken.

At the trial for Polly's killer, one unfortunate shortcoming became very apparent: the apathy shown by Polly's neighbors as the evil stranger lurked about the neighborhood. Many of her neighbors testified under oath that they had seen the killer prowling about the neighborhood in the weeks and days preceding Polly's kidnapping. They all admitted that his presence was inappropriate, but none of them took it upon themselves to notify law enforcement. If even one of them had Polly might still be alive. We will never know for sure. One thing we are sure of, neighbors can join forces and work together to make their neighborhoods safe. Neighbors can challenge situations that are threatening or unusual, and produce an environment of caring, safety and security in their communities.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

We are faced with a simple choice. Either we are part of the solution or we are part of the problem. By ignoring and denying that we do have a problem with crime and terrorism in America, we place our children, property and way of life at risk. By progressively addressing crime and terrorism in our communities we will become part of the solution. An important step towards the solution is for responsible citizens and communities to create partnerships with law enforcement that will address these important quality of life issues. When we take responsibility to become part of the solution, we create pro-active communities that take pride in accomplishments.

Neighborhood Watch simply asks participants is to immediately report all suspicious persons and activities to your local police department.

WHY YOU NEED NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

- ◆ A foreign enemy that has demonstrated total disregard for American lives has declared war on America.
- ◆ Domestic terrorists have also established a willingness to destroy our citizens and property as a means to their ends.
- ◆ Statistics show that eighty percent of us will become victims of violent crime at least once in our lifetime.
- ◆ A child is murdered in the United States every two hours.
- ◆ A violent crime is committed every sixteen seconds.
- ◆ A residential burglary is committed every nine seconds.

Don't become a statistic. You cannot change the world by yourself, but a group of people working together through strength can implement positive results. By monitoring and reporting crime responsibly and effectively you will send a clear message to criminals, "Our neighborhood (community) will not tolerate deviate or terrorist behavior. If you chose to break the law or try to otherwise undermine our way of life, then do it somewhere else." By watching out for each other's child and property neighbors become active crime fighting partners with law enforcement.

AFTER SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES FOR LATCHKEY CHILDREN

◆ Fact: The peak hours of juvenile crime are from 3:00pm to 8:00pm¹

An elderly woman we shall call Mrs. Jones approached me at a town hall meeting in Ohio some years back with one of the most creative and pro-active solutions to the latchkey problem that I have ever heard. There is no reason that her model cannot be replicated in communities all over America.

Mrs. Jones belonged to a quilting bee that met several times per week. Although the ladies enjoyed spending time together and their quilts were beautiful, they felt unfulfilled. The common complaint was that they were disenfranchised and unproductive. Unwilling to accept social irrelevance, they sought projects that would allow them to contribute to society.

One day as the ladies were discussing options Mrs. Jones mentioned a new study on latchkey children that she had heard about on the radio. Apparently, many of the young children in their town went home to empty houses after school each day and were left alone until dinnertime. Mrs. Jones was concerned, and the ladies agreed, that without proper adult supervision such young children would be vulnerable to risky impulses or questionable influences. So, they decided to do something about the problem.

One of Mrs. Jones' dear friends said that her church, which she had attended regularly for more than fifty-years, sat idle during the week. Mrs. Jones insisted that they schedule an appointment with the church deacons as soon as possible. Within a week the ladies, who were by now calling themselves the Purple Panthers, and the church devised a plan that pro-actively addressed the latchkey problem in their community.

The church made classrooms and other communal areas available for an after school program and underwrote the minimal utility and maintenance costs and the Purple Panthers volunteered to staff the facility. Now, because of a unique partnership more than 150 young low-income children are being cared for between the hours school ends and parents get off work.

So, now the Purple Panthers are providing an invaluable service to young at-risk children, the two groups interact and provide each other with much needed companionship. The ladies have achieved a sense of accomplishment and value that otherwise would be missing from their lives. It also enables them to show the rest of the community that creative solutions are not only possible, but they are easily achieved at low cost.

¹ Fight Crime: Invest In Kids, September 9, 1997: After School Programs or After School Crime

ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE WORK OF CHILDREN'S NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The message has become a clarion call over the past several years: Government is no longer willing to shoulder the burden of social programs designed to assist the needy. From World Trade Center disaster relief to homeless services to child abuse and missing children, America's charities are accepting the responsibility to provide these critical and necessary services.

With certain high profile exceptions, it has never been easy for non-profit agencies to acquire the funding that is necessary to provide service for or educate the populations they serve. However, as difficult an obstacle as that may have been in the past, the events of September 11 created an even more daunting dynamic. It remains difficult to look at the horrific images of the attack upon the World Trade Center towers without expressing some form of physical revulsion. When the second jetliner slashed into the World Trade Center it was like a knife thrust into the heart of America for that was the moment everything changed, nearly 4,000 people lost their lives and the earth itself shuddered in disbelief.

Charities not directly associated with 9/11 disaster relief will find it increasingly difficult to fulfill their missions in post terrorist America. Unfortunately, the needs of communities served by non-disaster relief agencies do not cease when psychopaths blow up our skyscrapers. Therefore, it becomes every citizen's patriotic duty to assist these efforts through benevolent action. We can accomplish these goals in a variety of ways.

Most people are surprised to learn that viable non-profit organizations working for the benefit all children exist within their communities. Child protective services, day care options, after school alternatives such as Boys and Girls Clubs and child advocacy agencies all over America struggle to fulfill their mission and meet their social goals. The fundamental obstacles facing most of these organizations are a lack of adequate funding and advertising. Their dedicated employees work long hours in relative anonymity attempting to secure the money necessary to effectively fulfill organizational goals.

There are many ways that responsible citizens can assist these agencies and lift the burden off their shoulders. However, pick your cause and your organization carefully. Call the better business bureau, the Chamber of Commerce and talk to your friends about any non-profit organization you are considering. Although most non-profit organizations are viable and provide much needed services, remember fraud and dishonesty exists in every facet of our culture.

Since most non-profits suffer from insufficient staff due to lack of funding, you can volunteer even a few hours of your time per week. If you have a particular talent or ability you can offer a valuable resource that might not otherwise be available. Non-profits tend to be flexible in their work hours and many tasks can be accomplished off site, so that you need not even leave your home to fulfill your chosen responsibilities. Volunteering time to help a little child is the greatest gift of all.

Quality of life in America is very expensive and difficult to achieve, and perhaps you do not have the time to volunteer your services to a child oriented non-profit organization. Fortunately, there are alternative solutions. Most organizations accept and encourage in-kind donations. Anything from office supplies to computer hardware and software to vehicles and property can go a long way toward easing their burden. Many of us have old computers, printers and other equipment taking up shelf space that would greatly benefit a non-profit organization.

If however, one has neither the time to volunteer, nor material goods to give, a generous financial donation is always welcome. Many non-profit organizations live on the brink of bankruptcy and all welcome financial assistance. A non-profit with a healthy bank account is a non-profit that devotes its resources toward fulfillment of its mission goals. An added benefit to this approach is that donations made to legitimate 501-(c)(3) organizations are tax deductible.

We all want to make a difference in the world, but many of us search in vain for a way to accomplish this worthy goal. By working together and supporting real world solutions we can make a difference. You will not only be doing the right thing, but it will make you feel better and give you a very real sense of social accomplishment. You will go to bed at night knowing that you have done something for a little child with special needs, and if we all did that the world would be a better place.

NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRITY

A woman in Portland, Oregon said that because of tolerant zoning policy an adult book and sex paraphernalia shop opened in her neighborhood. Deaf ears met complaints to the zoning commission and city council.

Picketing the sex shop during peak business hours as a form of non-violent protest only resulted in drawing attention to the sex shop thereby increasing business.

In a creative expression of free speech the neighbors videotaped the license numbers of customer's vehicles for publication in the local newspaper.

Initially, this action created tension in certain households, but within just a few weeks business at the porn shop dried up entirely. It did not take very long for the proprietor to realize that this was a community that was not going to accept his business, so he went someplace else.

This approach to a neighborhood outrage demonstrates that a group of citizens working together can determine their own destiny. Homeowners, families with small children and other *long-term* residents of the neighborhood proactively worked to maintain the integrity of their own community.

SCHOOL BUS SCHEDULING AND ROUTING

School districts are under increasing pressure from parents to find safer and more efficient means of dispatching school busses. In some areas children must walk several blocks to and from the closest school bus stop, often times alone, often times after the sun has set. This places them at risk of victimization.

A twice-convicted child killer living on the corner where a school bus stopped filed the original challenge to Megan's Law. In Florida little Jimmy Ryce was abducted and murdered shortly after a school bus dropped him off at the end of the day. These are but two egregious examples of the problems that face school districts that attempt to provide safe transportation for children.

In turn, school districts must weigh the cost of efficient service that meets the needs of all children with the convenience and location of scheduled stops. A variety of companies have designed software packages that monitor the efficiency of bus routes and schedules.

School districts can either acquire these packages independently or pool their resources to achieve the desired results.

Versatrans Solutions, Inc: <http://www.versatrans.com/>

EduLog: www.edulog.com/

Trapeze Software Group: <http://www.trapezesoftware.com/index.html>

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

One of the great criminal justice travesties of our time is the continual re-victimization of children once they enter the system. A child identified as sexually or physically abused enters a confusing, frightening adult-centered world, traveling from one place to another as many agencies, physicians and law enforcement professionals seek to gain necessary information. The result of this course of action is increased trauma on a child that can inhibit the recovery process.

Statistics show that a strong indicator of whether or not a child will heal from trauma is directly related to how society and the child's family respond to abuse allegations. The Children's Advocacy Center's were designed to provide neutral, safe, child-friendly places for children who have been victims of abuse. The Centers provide prevention, intervention, and treatment services to physically and sexually abused children and their families within a child focused team approach.

Typically, Children's Advocacy Centers unite child protective services, law enforcement, medical, educational, legal and mental health professionals into a cohesive network whose joint mission is to protect children from the secondary victimization by systems and to facilitate treatment and rehabilitative services to the child victim and his family.

The National Children's Advocacy Center can be reached at:

200 Westside Square, Suite 700

Huntsville, AL 35801

Phone: (205) 533-0531

Fax: (205) 534-6883

Internet: <http://www.ncac-hsv.org/>

Email: ncacadm@hiwaay.net

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

The KlaasKids Foundation has visited hundreds of towns and cities through the benevolence of local businesses that are willing to give back to the communities who have provided them with success. Typically, our business partners underwrite a town meeting where we discuss relevant issues and/or a day fingerprinting and photographing children at no cost to their families. By joining forces and working together we are able to accomplish goals otherwise beyond our grasp. This philosophy of cooperation and benevolence should be embraced by every responsible business with which we do business and can be accomplished in many ways.

SUPPORT A LOCAL NON-PROFIT AGENCY

Current business culture dictates that non-profit agencies approach the private sector for support. Since no business has the time or resource to support every organization that comes knocking on the door, they lose opportunities to learn about wonderful agencies and programs that can benefit their community.

We recommend reversing the process. Research local non-profit organizations; contact one that is working diligently and successfully in your community and offer to assist them in achieving their goals. Then, when you are contacted by other non-profit organizations and you are not able to assist them in their efforts, tell them what you are doing, who you are committed to and suggest that they contact another business and suggest that they follow your example.

This positive and proactive approach accomplishes several tasks. It allows you to reach out and give back to the community that has ensured your success. By being proactively involved in your community, you create an example for other business owners to emulate. As for the bottom line, there are tax benefits inherent in supporting non-profit organizations and you will be helping more people in your community.

DONATE ADVERTISING SPACE

Many non-profit agencies exist in obscurity. Due to lack of funding and skeletal staff, they may be doing great things in the community to little or no fanfare. This is like the tree in the forest: Does it make a sound if nobody hears it fall?

One way to help non-profit organizations overcome obscurity at *no cost* to your business is by offering them limited advertising space. Most businesses advertise in newspapers and the yellow pages. By simply printing the logo of a non-profit agency in a corner of your advertising space and declaring that you support their goals, you can go far towards raising awareness for that organization.

Create a monthly window of opportunity for non-profit organizations to pitch your company for advertising space. Designate a trusted manager to undertake this task or become personally involved. You may be surprised by what you learn.

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Employee Volunteer Program allows full-time employees to take up to five hours of paid time per month to volunteer at a non-profit organization. Not only does this benefit your company and employees, it also gives you a chance to give back something to the community that has supported you over the years. Offering to pay only a percentage of the volunteer duty on the clock or produce a list of authorized non-profit organizations can amend this plan.

Interested employees should complete and submit a Volunteer Sheet. Scheduling of volunteer work must be approved in advance and be subject to verification.

THE CIVIC CLUB OPTION

Ask each manager to join a civic club and bring back information on what is happening in the community. Not only is this a good way to gauge the pulse of your community, but it also produces great opportunities to network and build your business.

IN HOUSE DAY CARE

A great benefit to any young parent seeking employment is the ability to locate high quality day care service at an affordable price. Many employers throughout the United States are assisting their employees by providing in house day care service at low or no cost to their loyal employees.

This approach provides a great incentive for potential employees by removing one of the great obstacles to young two income families. The knowledge that their children are being well taken care of during working hours gives parents the peace of mind necessary for increased productivity. The employer on the other hand provides an added benefit that is often times unavailable to the competition. Everybody wins with this approach.

SAFE PLACE

The YMCA's *Safe Place* program links the business community, youth shelters, youth service agencies, and dedicated volunteers together to provide young people-in-crisis a safe route to professional resources and a way to stay off dangerous streets.

Safe Place provides immediate help for young people when and where they need it most — in their own neighborhoods. The program creates a network of businesses and public buildings that display a bright yellow and black *Safe Place* sign for any child in need of help.

The unique aspect of *Safe Place* is that the business sector joins with youth shelters and dedicated volunteers to provide refuge and support for these young people. Businesses can participate by becoming a *Safe Place* site as well as sponsoring youth-related programs with much-needed funding. In 1989, Domino's Pizza became the national *Safe Place* site sponsor. Many other businesses across the country, including fast food chains, convenience stores and merchandise outlets, have agreed to become *Safe Place* sites.

Other non-business organizations are also getting involved. For example, fire stations are some of the most popular *Safe Place* sites throughout the country.

Hospitals, libraries, emergency centers, and other community agencies also have volunteered to be safe places for kids. In fact, some communities use their mass transit systems, or other utility and service vehicles as the first point of contact with young people who are scared, confused, or even lost.

THE GENTRIFICATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF AMERICA

One fundamental truth that becomes evident as one travels the country is the gentrification and standardization of America. The advantages of uniformity are obvious: the quality of certain products is consistently assured, unwelcome surprises are minimized and our minds are put at ease on these issues. However, gentrification and standardization also carry liabilities. Although we know that the coffee will taste good, the business owner might be a multi-national corporation that has never set foot in your city let alone your state. How then, are they going to know about the problems that exist within communities and become part of the solution to those problems?

The most obvious solution to this problem is to work through local government to mandate a social responsibility component for every business that opens within your community. Chose from the suggestions that we have provided or tailor a list to the needs of your city or town. This way, ignorance or inaccessibility is no longer a viable excuse for inaction.

LAW ENFORCEMENT SOLUTIONS

On September 11, 2001 the New York Police and Fire Departments displayed uncommon courage and heroism when they ignored their personal safety to rescue the victims of the World Trade Center disaster in New York City. Hopefully, their valor will not be forgotten, because prior to the events that changed our world forever, law enforcement was a difficult and thankless profession.

Cops are never there when we need them, yet they are always present when we cruise through a stop sign. They are never on the scene when a crime is committed, only when it is cleaned up. They continually arrest the same people, only to see them released back onto the street before they finish processing the paperwork. There are so many rules and regulations dictating the process of investigations that cases are routinely dismissed for vague technicalities. Parents point to an officer in uniform and tell their children that if they don't behave, the policeman will arrest them. In effect, law enforcement is blamed in large part for America's escalating crime rates. They are underpaid, under budgeted, over worked and routinely criticized yet they continually place their lives at risk to protect innocent citizens. They are social punching bags performing a thankless yet vital role in maintaining the public safety and stemming the tide of domestic and foreign terrorism.

Coupled with the indelible valor of September 11, the success and governmental support for community policing techniques, computer based technology and the ability to share information has given law enforcement powerful and effective new tools. A new generation of computer literate, sensitive police officer is emerging and influencing the way law enforcement is conducted. The sharing of information, once jealously guarded is becoming increasingly popular. The knowledge that partnerships with the private sector enhance rather than undermine the mandate for safety is escalating.

WWW.BEYONDMISSING.COM

- ◆ **BeyondMissing**, the solution for the new millennium, is an interactive, online crime fighting community and our number one priority is missing children.
- ◆ **BeyondMissing** is a secure, Internet based tool designed to enable law enforcement to instantaneously create and distribute photo flyers of missing children and other persons of interest to law enforcement and the communities they serve.
- ◆ By leveraging Internet, Email and Facsimile technology law enforcement professionals utilize a universal platform with confidence that the critical first hours following a predatory kidnapping are being maximized via targeted distribution lists.
- ◆ Because it is Internet based, law enforcement is not required to purchase redundant hardware or software.
- ◆ A separate community component of **BeyondMissing** will serve as a platform to educate and inform the public about information regarding missing children's flyers, Megan's Law, law enforcement contact information, and other

relevant information of interest to law enforcement, media and the general public.

- ◆ Because it is unique, innovative, adaptable, user friendly and utilizes cutting edge technology **BeyondMissing's** functionality will continue to evolve.
- ◆ **BeyondMissing** is free to America's law enforcement agencies and requires no proprietary hardware or software. Because it is Internet based, the same sets of tools are available to Mayberry and NYPD.

For more information please log onto www.beyondmissing.com.

THE USE OF CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS FOR NON-EMERGENCY LAW ENFORCEMENT DUTIES

- ◆ Fact: There is one law enforcement agent for every 416 citizens in the United States.

Many of the 17,000 law enforcement agencies throughout America are understaffed and restricted by severe budget restraints. This partially explains why police officers never seem to be available when we need them most. Law enforcement agencies all over America have devised clever solutions to this universal dilemma. They have devised ways for a volunteer force of citizens to augment their staff's and allow trained officers to do what they do best: fight crime.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio assembled a volunteer posse of more than 6,000 citizens to patrol parking lots, implement safety seminars and otherwise patrol the streets of Maricopa County, Arizona. Although they do not carry weapons and are only able to perform citizen arrests, this incredibly popular and innovative solution eases the burden on the Sheriff and his deputies. Every posse member undergoes extensive training that outlines volunteer duties and limitations. For more information on Maricopa County Posse Reserve program log onto: <http://www.mcso.org/submenu.asp?file=posse>.

In Oxnard, California Citizen Patrol's regularly patrols neighborhoods looking for suspicious persons and activities. As each patrol is familiar with the assigned neighborhood, they are aware of aberrations from the norm. If suspicion is aroused, the patrol leader communicates with police dispatch through a dedicated cell phone. Like the posse in Maricopa County, the citizen patrol does not carry weapons and their mission is one of careful observation. Because of this and other law enforcement innovations, Oxnard is one of the safest communities in California.

The Oxnard solution is similar to neighborhood watch models whose sole function is to responsibly report suspicious activities and individuals to law enforcement. Despite suspicions to the contrary, police do prefer pro-active citizen participation. Advance notification of possible problems and potential crime is preferable to being reactive and initiating an investigation after the fact. For more information on the Oxnard Citizen Patrol program log onto: <http://www.oxnardpd.org/programs.htm>.

Other clever and effective law enforcement duties are being implemented throughout our country. Well-trained and motivated volunteers can effectively handle everything from clerical to non-emergency dispatch duties.

Check with your local police or Sheriff to see what community-based options exist within your community. Working with law enforcement to create and maintain a safe community is very rewarding and provides a great sense of tangible accomplishment. If they are not already using one of the options listed above, suggest the possibility of organizing a civilian force to augment their mandate.

CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE PLAN

- ◆ Fact: Of the 876,213 persons reported missing to America's law enforcement agencies in 2000, 85% were children.
- ◆ Fact: 152,265 of all missing persons were categorized as either endangered or involuntary.
- ◆ Fact: A child disappears in the United States every 40 seconds.

Less than 2% of law enforcement agencies are trained and prepared to effectively respond to the stranger abduction of a child. Since every community is subject to stranger abduction it stands to reason that a child kidnapper will eventually target your community. The chances of a safe and successful recovery are dramatically reduced if child victims are not recovered within three hours of the event.

Experience demonstrates that an effective law enforcement response depends on a carefully considered protocol that maximizes the resources of law enforcement, media, the victim family and the community.

As a result of my daughter Polly's tragic abduction and murder in 1993, FBI special agent Gordon McNeill created the first FBI kidnap Taskforce in San Francisco. FBI field offices throughout America subsequently cloned agent McNeill's model. Ultimately, the FBI created a national Crimes Against Children/Serial Killer division at their headquarters in Quantico, Virginia. As a result of this focus on the plight of abducted children, the FBI wrote a stranger abduction protocol and made it available at no cost to every law enforcement agency in the United States.

In 1997, FBI Director Louis Freeh mandated that at least two special agents in every one of America's fifty-six FBI field offices dedicate their service to the plight of abducted children. Thus, for the first time in our country's history, not only is there an effective and proven plan of action, but also there are agents specifically trained in how to recover stolen children.

Unfortunately, law enforcement agencies tend to be territorial and are reluctant to share information with each other. Local agencies hesitate to enlist the help of the FBI because they are erroneously thought to dominate investigations. One way to circumvent this obstacle is for the victim's family to personally ask the FBI to intervene. This is what I did, and it is probably the smartest move I made in the initial aftermath of Polly's abduction.

The FBI and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States have created such protocols. Unfortunately, only after children have been irreparably victimized and their own shortcomings have been exposed.

To obtain the FBI Child Abduction Response Plan, contact:
Child Abduction and Serial Killer Unit
Critical Incident Response Group
Quantico, Virginia 22135
(540) 720-4700

MEDIA SOLUTIONS

All forms of popular media are increasingly criticized for undermining family values, producing unwholesome entertainment and promoting sensational spin, gory details or bushwhack interviews as responsible journalism. However, experience has taught me that most individuals involved in mass media maintain a moral value system and share the public's concern about the safety of children. When my daughter Polly was kidnapped I was skeptical of the news reporters who descended upon the crime scene like a swarm of locust. However, one intrepid television reporter, a veteran of numerous abductions correctly pointed out that ten seconds on the evening news would give Polly more coverage than I could achieve by nailing posters onto telephone poles for a hundred years. This incident went a far toward restoring my trust in news reporters and I have rarely declined an interview since.

In recent years, news coverage has increasingly highlighted the plight of children victimized by crime. The tragic cases of Polly Klaas, Jon Benet Ramsey and Columbine High School are but a few examples. Perceptions of an unfair and exploitative media linger despite the best efforts of many journalists to justly and correctly represent the mundane, heroic and horrific reality they report on from the front lines. Years of experience and the predictable consequence of crime, war or other forms of tragedy enable them to offer knowing and useful advice to people caught in the grip of trauma.

On the other hand, editors and news directors are driven by more dispassionate realities: anything that will increase the audience interest that drives the circulation and ratings, which determine the advertising revenues that define success. However, now that the major broadcast news anchors have been personally threatened by anthrax, the answer to that and many other relevant questions must be painfully obvious. We are seeing fear in the eyes of and emotion in the voices of our newsreaders and reporters. Arrogance is being replaced by the humility that defines so much of the victim psychology. They are finally realizing what victims have known all along: violence is an equal opportunity stalker and fear shows no prejudice.

THE AMBER ALERT

In the aftermath of the January 17, 1996 kidnap and murder of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman in Arlington, Texas, a concerned citizen contacted a Dallas/Fort Worth radio station with an idea designed to assist in the quick recovery of other kidnapped children. The Amber Alert was inspired by and is dedicated to the memory of little Amber Hagerman.

The Amber Alert is a cooperative effort between radio stations and local law enforcement agencies in which radio stations are immediately notified upon confirmation of a child kidnapping. Cooperating media outlets then interrupt regularly scheduled programming to broadcast the alert and any subsequent information provided by the police. Once the information is received by each station, it is utilized at their discretion: how often it is repeated, and in what fashion.

The integrity of the Amber Alert is guaranteed by established standardized protocol. The only way that it can be activated is by fax contact from local law enforcement. Therefore, any citizen who calls a media outlet to report a kidnapping is directed to immediately call the jurisdictional law enforcement agency.

Most television and radio stations operate around the clock, as do most police departments. Therefore, access is not restricted by normal business hours and safeguards can be implemented to ensure consistent activation of the Amber Alert 24/7/365.

There are obvious proprietary benefits to radio and television transmission of the Amber Alert. Most people driving in their automobiles are listening to the radio. Activation of the Amber Alert means that many thousands of eyes are immediately alerted that a child has been kidnapped. Besides the immediacy of knowing the geographical location of the crime listeners can be looking for a child that meets the description of the kidnap victim, the abductor if that information is known and a vehicle description if that information is available. Television has the added benefit of visual transmission.

An Association of Radio Managers, or some similar organization in your area is the single best way to begin the Amber Alert in your community. Law enforcement, concerned citizens, media outlets and community leaders must cooperate in order to make this much-needed network a success.

The general managers of the participating electronic media outlets must work with their local association network and local law enforcement agencies to properly implement the Amber Alert. Logistical protocol, procedures and standardized reporting forms must be generated and distributed among all participants. Local law enforcement agencies delegate an appropriate departmental liaison to coordinate the plan with other departments and the local media outlets. Once this network has been established and tested, full implementation of the Amber Alert becomes a reality. The system is in place and ready to respond to child kidnapping.

If you are interested in more information on the Amber Alert, please check out the following websites: <http://www.michmab.com/amberalert.html>, or <http://www.klaaskids.org/v6n1p5.htm>.

MAINTAIN AWARENESS

My daughter Polly was missing for sixty-five days before the horrible truth was discovered. During that time it became increasingly difficult for even the most dedicated television, radio or newspaper reporter to justify continued coverage. Although Polly's family and community continually invented new reasons to resurrect the story, they were not all successful and certainly not newsworthy in the eyes of news editors.

However, an extraordinary thing happened. To this day I am not sure if it was by accident or design. Since I cannot get a definitive answer, I must believe that it was coincidence. On any given day at least one reporter covered the story. The cumulative effect was that Polly's story was covered almost every day for sixty-five days by either a television or radio station or a newspaper. The power of that

prolonged awareness was significant in solving the mystery of Polly's disappearance.

Program managers, news editors and the other powers that be in a given media market can organize and implement a plan whereby coverage of missing children cases were covered by at least one outlet on any given day. This would enable future families of missing children and their communities to focus their efforts in other needed areas of concern.

Such a plan not only eases the burden on families; it aids in the recovery of the child. Public awareness is one of the most powerful weapons that exist in these cases. It also allows local media to offer a valuable and needed service to the community.

PERSONAL SOLUTIONS

Parents claim that they don't discuss safety issues with their children because they don't want to scare the kids when it is their own fears that they are unable to overcome. My experience with children is that they crave all forms of knowledge that will give them advantages in life: from knowledge in the classroom to athletics on the playground to personal safety in their communities. Children have a tremendous capacity to learn and draw conclusions from information that they receive. As long as you do not sensationalize, but speak from a position of compassion and love, we can overcome our fears and regain control of our destiny.

To raise safety minded children, talk to them regularly not just when there is a breaking news story. You must be willing to take on some pretty unsavory subjects such as child predators, drugs, and violence. But, if you deny these realities, they will come back to haunt you in one form or another. When it comes to teaching your child the important lessons in life, there is no one more qualified than you are. Don't be afraid to trust your parental instincts.

In my travels I have had the wonderful opportunity of meeting and talking with parents around the country. I am continually asked, "What is the best way to start teaching our children about safety?"

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN

Teaching a child how to recognize a good action, as opposed to a bad one, is far more productive than trying to identify the difference between a good and or a bad person by appearance. Most adults cannot even do this, so what makes us think a child can? An action, however, can be seen and discerned before a person can get close enough to the child to become a danger. There are two steps to the exercise listed below.

Step 1: Find out how your child identifies "strangers." Give your child some paper and crayons and ask him or her to draw a good stranger and a bad one. Many times the child will draw the good stranger, as someone that looks friendly and the bad one as someone that looks dirty and frightening. In reality, the predators that pose the greatest danger to children are masters at appearing friendly. This is how they disarm children for the first contact.

Step 2: Now you can gently and clearly show your child that they can't really tell what a person's motives are by how they look, but that they can by how they act. Define good actions and bad ones and begin to point them out to your child on a regular basis - an action a week is a good pace. Where do you find the information you need to define good and bad actions? In your daily life, in information gathered from your child safety organization, and so on. Examples are all around you.

For instance, you and your child are standing together at the grocery store. An elderly gentleman walks up, pats your child on the head and says, "My, what a fine looking youngster." After talking to you for a moment, he walks away. Was he a stranger? Yes. Was he a bad stranger? No.

It's OK to pay compliments, but what's not OK is if, instead of walking up to you, the man tries to get your child's attention and lure him or her away from you. Was he a stranger? Yes. Was he a bad stranger? Yes! Not because of his appearance, but because of his action.

Another example: Your teenager is waiting for you in the shopping mall parking lot when a man in a leg cast, carrying several heavy packages, approaches her. The man asks your daughter to help him take the packages to his car. Is this an appropriate action? No! The man should seek assistance from a mall merchant, not a young girl waiting for a ride. Parking lots are big and there is no telling what will happen when you reach the vehicle. We are taught to assist those in need, but mass murderer Ted Bundy used this classic assistance lure during his infamous crime spree.

And one more: Little Billy loves to go online and enter Internet chat rooms. He gets into conversation with 12-year-old Mary. Soon Billy and Mary have told each other all about themselves, including where they live and go to school. This behavior is totally inappropriate: the possibility exists that 12-year-old Mary is really 45-year-old Chester the Molester.

There are many action examples that you can share with your children to teach how to keep themselves safer. Just remember: Keep it simple, be creative, and don't be scared. Get smart!

In Spokane, Washington I met ten-year old Alicia. Upon receiving permission from her mother Alicia and her seven-year old sister were playing in their neighborhood park when a nice looking man in a shiny red truck called the girls over. "Will you girls help me find my lost puppy?"

"No," Alicia said. "We don't know you."

"I'll give you twenty dollars," he said, proffering a wad of bills.

"Don't go," Alicia said. "We don't know him."

The man persisted, so the girls walked through the park towards their home. When they got near the street the man in the truck was waiting for them. "Will you girls help me find my puppy?" he asked.

Alicia took her sister's hand, pulled her close and said, "Come with me. We'll make an obstacle course through the park so that he can't follow us." Her sister's cap fell off and the man left his truck to retrieve it. He called after the retreating youngsters, "Come back and get your hat".

Alicia told her sister to "Stay with me," as they crossed the street and approached a house with children she did not know playing in the front yard. Alicia asked the children if she could talk to their mother. All of the children entered the house and Alicia called her mom. Alicia saw the man in the shiny red truck a few days later on a field trip. Now she is afraid to play in her front yard. I think Alicia is a hero because she wasn't conned by his lure and her sister is safe.

Alicia's experience demonstrates many of the important safety rules we should be teaching our children. First, she checked with her mom. Then, she went with her sister, and we all know that there is safety in numbers. When the man in the red truck called to them, Alicia put distance between them. When her sister attempted

to retrieve her hat, Alicia refused to let go of her hand. Finally, Alicia did an extraordinary thing: she approached strangers. She instinctively understood that strangers could be good and helpful. Children, mothers with children, police officers in uniform, store clerks in the mall are all strangers that can assist children facing a potentially dangerous situation.

More than anything else, Alicia used her brain. She based her decisions upon the appropriateness of action. This is a story from which we can all learn. Alicia's mother talks to her daughters about safety on a regular basis and it is obvious that these talks have served her young daughters well.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Know your neighborhood. Know the best places for your children to play and places to avoid like alleys and dark stairwells. Show your children the safest routes to and from school and insist that they use the buddy system.

Know your children's friends, where they live, their addresses and phone numbers. Insist that your children be home before dark. The more you know about your neighborhood the safer your family will be.

FINGERPRINT AND PHOTOGRAPH YOUR CHILDREN

Every parent should have a permanent record of their children's fingerprints and a current photograph; preferably a head and shoulder shot. There are many organizations that offer this kind of service. Many of them charge a fee to photograph and fingerprint children, but it is not necessary to pay for this service.

The KlaasKids Foundation provides a free Child ID Packet that includes a fingerprint ink strip if you wish to fingerprint your children at home. Just log onto the KlaasKids Foundation Website at: <http://www.klaaskids.org/pg-kit.htm> to order your free Child ID Packet. You can also contact your local Kiwani's or Rotary Clubs as they oftentimes offer child safety day events throughout the community and provide this service for free. Police and Sheriff's offices may also fingerprint and photograph community children. Every school age child in America is photographed at school on an annual basis. This photograph is ideal for the suggested application.

It is not necessary to database this information. In fact, it is better not to. Many for profit organizations sell a service that promises to disseminate photographs and fingerprints of children to law enforcement should the need ever arise. They usually provide you with a (800) number that is supposedly manned twenty-four hours per day. There are many problems with this approach. First of all, you do not know these people and there is no way to guarantee that they will follow-up with their promise. Secondly, databases can be violated. Finally, if you have the information secured in a safe place in your home, you can hand it to the first police officer on the scene and guarantee that it gets into the proper hands in a timely manner.

The advantage of fingerprint/photograph documentation is that it provides law enforcement with the information they need to quickly create a missing child flyer and otherwise aid their investigation. Parents facing the disappearance of a child may be too distraught to dig through family albums or boxes in an effort to provide police with the needed photograph and personal information. If a

personal history fact sheet accompanies the photo/fingerprint documentation, it aids law enforcement in correctly identifying the child and perhaps contacting friends, teachers, doctors or other individuals who may have insight into the missing child's whereabouts.

DNA COLLECTION KIT

With the assistance of the California State DNA Laboratory, the KlaasKids Foundation has developed a "Do It Yourself DNA Collection Kit." Now, parents can collect their children's DNA at no cost using household items. In the past this service has cost between \$5-\$200 per child. To find out how, log onto: <http://www.klaaskids.org/pg-dna.htm>.

USE MEGAN'S LAW

- ◆ Fact: In 1992, two states informed the community about the release of convicted sex offenders into the neighborhood. At the dawn of the New Millennium every state has some form of community notification.

Megan's Law overwhelmed America in the aftermath of the kidnap and murder of seven-year-old Megan Kanka in the summer of 1994. Lured into the house of a convicted sex offender who lived across the street from the Kanka family in Hamilton Township, New Jersey, Megan was found raped and murdered three days later. Megan's mother argued that had she known that a convicted sex offender was living in such close proximity to her home, she never would have allowed Megan to play alone in the front yard. Megan's Law is dedicated to the memory of little Megan Kanka.

Three common complaints that I hear everywhere I go are that the criminal justice system serves the wrong people, politicians do not respond to the needs of average Americans and that people feel powerless to do anything about it. Megan's Law is a real world response to all three complaints.

Megan's law is designed to give a head's up to the community when a convicted sexual offender is released back into the neighborhood. It can be successfully argued that these people should never be released from prison: But they are. By contacting local law enforcement and accessing the sex offender database, you can use this information to protect your children from these dangerous individuals. This is criminal justice legislation designed to protect children. This is a legislative response that fulfills a societal need. Government has decided that the safety of children is more important than the privacy of convicted sex offenders. This is a tool that allows parents to proactively work for the safety of their young children.

There are two problems with Megan's Law. The first is that it may offer a false sense of security. The typical pedophile may rape hundreds of children before he is ever arrested, and many pedophiles are never arrested. Therefore, one cannot conclude that a sex offender database includes all sex offenders. In fact, it may include only a small percentage of those wishing to do harm to your children. Therefore, it is important to raise your children as if there is a sex offender living in your neighborhood, whether that person is on the list or not.

Secondly, information publicly available on the sex offender database should be used to protect children, not extract vigilante justice. Thus far, only a small percentage of listed sex offenders have been harassed or otherwise threatened by

public disclosure. However, should the percentages go up, we might very well lose Megan's Law. The opponents of the law will use any means necessary to negate or rescind this powerful tool to protect children.

To find out how Megan's Law works in your state log onto <http://www.klaaskids.org/pg-legmeg.htm> and select your state from the interactive map.

CELL PHONES

Two of the great benefits of the so-called cellular revolution are the increasingly low costs of and accessibility of cellular telephones. It is increasingly difficult to argue against giving children their own cell phone as an inexpensive and efficient way of staying in touch with family and loved ones. What child has not been dropped off at soccer practice only to find that it has been canceled and they have no way of contacting their parents? Giving children cell phones and establishing sensible but strict rules on their use is the smart thing to do.

MILITARY SOLUTIONS

This solution is only viable during peacetime. Because of the horrific events of September 11, 2001 our brave military personnel are fully engaged in defeating a particularly heinous enemy. However, when we return to peace, I hope that our elected leaders revisit the mission of the men and women serving our country and consider the following option.

PEACETIME MISSION STATEMENT

Polly was kidnapped during San Francisco's Fleet Week. This is the time of year when the U.S. Navy, including the Blue Angels, descends upon the San Francisco Bay to show off. During an appeal for search parties, many sailors and other local military personnel volunteered their services. It soon became apparent that many of these highly organized soldiers had expert training in search and rescue operations. Brad Dennis, a Navy Seal then stationed in San Diego spent two weeks organizing and facilitating one of the largest and best-organized manhunts in American history. More than 1,000 square miles on the ground and 3,000 square miles were searched in the air. Unfortunately, Brad was forced to return to his military assignment, and we lost a valuable resource in the ongoing search for Polly. However, when Brad returned to duty he left a highly organized operation that continued with the blessing of law enforcement until Polly was recovered on December 4, 1993.

- ◆ The U.S. military is the best-equipped and trained search and secure force in the world, especially when force size is considered.
- ◆ Units are constantly training in field deployment.
- ◆ They utilize techniques and the most advanced communication, sensing and surveillance electronics available in the world.
- ◆ The military can rapidly deploy to the most inaccessible areas.
- ◆ They have mobile secure communication.
- ◆ The military has night vision and sensing availability that is unsurpassed. They "own the night".
- ◆ The armed forces have a proven chain of command that is non-jurisdictional.

AIR MARSHALS

60 Minutes correspondent Andy Rooney introduced one seemingly brilliant idea when he suggested that the military train active members of the armed forces to assume the critical mission of Air Marshals. One of the horrific realities of September 11, 2001 is that airline security is woefully unequipped to protect travelers from the threat of terrorism. Utilizing military personnel for this critically important job would ensure the highest training standards without inflating ticket prices.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

A fundamental responsibility of government is protecting public safety; therefore we must insist that policy makers at every level embrace, author and support legislation that is protective of innocent citizens. However, we must approach the crime issue from a variety of perspectives if we are to achieve positive, long-term results.

Of course it is important to ensure safety by removing violent criminals and sexual offenders from our streets and notifying us when they are returned back into society, but if we are going to be truly effective we also have to focus on at-risk children. These are the children who have very few options in life, exist in poverty, are caught up in cycles of violence or other forms of abuse, are successfully romanced by drugs and excessive alcohol and otherwise fall through the social cracks.

To that end, we have listed and outlined a series of legislative proposals designed to effectively remove violent predators from society; notify the public when those individuals are released back into society; and prevent future generations of violent and sexual offenders.

Two of the great lessons of the 2000 Presidential election are that every vote counts and that politicians are very good at counting. Anybody who believed that their opinion or vote was irrelevant should reevaluate their cynical point of view and feel empowered by the fact that individual ballots were inspected with magnifying glasses and endlessly analyzed by talk show pundits before the final decision was announced.

Politicians also understand that their very survival is dependent on their ability to recognize and effectively respond to constituent needs and this is where citizens have a real ace up their sleeve. A rule of thumb when assessing the political landscape is that every time a constituent takes the time to convey their concerns about a specific issue or piece of legislation, that constituent represents 100 similarly minded individuals who haven't taken the time to formally voice their opinion. Therefore, every person who writes a letter, sends a fax, phones in an opinion and write an email has represented themselves as 400 individuals: and that is what I call people power.

Although the federal system can establish model legislation and offer incentives for standardizing certain policies, it is state laws and statutes that address ninety-five percent of all criminal activity. In order to be prosecuted in Federal court one has to commit a crime against a federal employee, on federal property or across state lines. Therefore, any correspondence that you send as a result of this workbook should be targeted towards your state representatives.

To find out who your state representatives are and how to access them simply log onto the National Conference of State Legislators Website at: <http://www.ncsl.org/>, select State Legislatures, select Directory of State Legislatures. To find out who your Congressperson is log onto the United States Congress Website at: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> and follow the appropriate directions. Logging onto the United States Senate Website: <http://www.senate.gov> will produce similar results.

Although we have the power to create change through letter writing campaigns, each communication should maintain a degree of individuality. Therefore, to assist you in your efforts to influence your elected representatives we have provided a variety of mix and match statements at the end of this section.

MEGAN'S LAW

- ◆ 3 million cases of child abuse are reported annually.²
- ◆ On a given day about 388,000 offenders of rape or sexual assault are under the care, custody or control of correction agencies. About 60% of these sex offenders are under conditional supervision in the community.³
- ◆ 61% of rape victims are less than 18 years old and 29% are less than 11.

On May 17, 1996, President Clinton signed Megan's Law. Megan's Law goals include:

1. ***Sex Offender Registration*** - Each state and the federal government are compelled to register individuals who have been convicted of sex crimes against children. Sex offender registration laws are necessary because: sex offenders pose a high risk of re-offending after release from custody; protecting the public from sex offenders is a primary governmental interest; the privacy interests of persons convicted of sex offenses are less important than the government's interest in public safety, and release of certain information about sex offenders to public agencies and the general public will assist in protecting the public safety.

2. ***Community Notification*** - Each state and the federal government are compelled to make private and personal information on convicted sex offenders available to the public. Community notification is based on the presumption that: it will assist law enforcement in investigations; establish legal grounds to hold known offenders; deter sex offenders from committing new offenses, and offer citizens information they can use to protect children from victimization.

The criteria for implementing Megan's Law are left up to the states as long as they follow certain specific guidelines. However, this approach results in disparities among states. For instance, many states make information on registered offenders available on the Internet while some states barely make the information available at all.

The KlaasKids Foundation believes that every State should make this important information available via the Internet and has created an interactive map has explained each states Megan's Law policy by category, with an emphasis on Internet access to the information. To find out about Megan's Law in your state simply log onto the KlaasKids Foundation Website at: <http://www.klaaskids.org/pg-legmeg.htm> and click on your State.

²Children s Welfare League: Children s Legislative Agenda 1995; pg. 15

³ USDOJ: Bureau of Justice Statistics: An Analysis of Data on Rape And Sexual Assault; Sex Offenses and Offenders. NCJ-163392, February 1997.

JOAN'S LAW

Joan D'Alessandro was a seven-year-old Brownie delivering Girl Scout cookies when she disappeared on April 19, 1973. On Easter Sunday, a neighbor, Joseph McGowan, admitted that he had murdered Joan and led police to her body.

McGowan lured Joan into his house, saying he had to get money to pay for the cookies. Once inside, he sexually assaulted her, struck her on the head and choked her to death. He then placed her body in a plastic bag and threw her over a cliff into a ravine. At the time of the murder, McGowan was a twenty-six year old science teacher in New York City. He was sentenced to life in prison.

McGowan has been eligible for parole twice, in 1987 and again in 1993. He was denied parole both times.

Faced with the prospect of having to justify the continued incarceration of McGowan, four years ago Joan's mother Rose Marie launched a successful effort to reform New Jersey's prison sentencing policy with "Joan's Law" which states that if you commit such a crime you "die in prison".

Joan's law mandates a sentence of no less than life imprisonment – with no opportunity for early release – be imposed on anyone who commits a serious violent felony that results in the death of a child under the age of fourteen. Joan's Law sets a minimum penalty of life imprisonment, but still enable prosecutors to seek the death penalty.

Enactment of Joan's Law means that no other family would have to go through the horrifying prospect of seeing their child's killer walking out of prison a free man. Currently, there are 6,500 inmates locked away in state prisons across the country for murdering a child. Not one of these criminals should ever be set free. In 1994 alone, 1,894 children were murdered in the United States. 75% of these children were under the age of eight.

This legislation sends a clear signal that we will not tolerate the killing of innocent children. If you take the life of a child, whether intentional or not, during the commission of another serious violent crime, you will "die in prison".

New Jersey is currently the only State that has passed Joan's Law.

THE VOLUNTEERS FOR CHILDREN ACT

- ◆ 1 of 3 girls and 1 of 6 boys will be subjected to sexual abuse by age 18.
- ◆ Studies suggest that 46% of child molesters are non-family members who are known to their victims.

Parents do not know whether the coach, scoutmaster, clergy, counselor, dance instructor, or any other adult supervising our children has a criminal record. It is thought that child victims never report most incidents of sexual abuse.

The Volunteers for Children Act was signed by President Clinton in October 1998 and encourages the States to pass legislation that will mandate criminal history background checks for individuals who have unsupervised access to children as part of their employment or volunteer activities. Unfortunately, most states have failed to comply with the Volunteers for Children Act.

Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and State criminal history record repositories maintain fingerprint-based criminal history records; and although these records are also exchanged for legally authorized, non-criminal justice uses, the purposes for and procedures by which they are exchanged vary widely from State to State.

An interstate and Federal-State compact is necessary to facilitate authorized interstate criminal history record exchanges for non-custodial justice purposes on a uniform basis, while permitting each State to effectuate its own dissemination policy within its own borders.

Such a compact will allow Federal and State records to be provided expeditiously to governmental and non-governmental agencies that use such records in accordance with pertinent Federal and State law, while simultaneously enhancing the accuracy of the records and safe guarding the information contained therein from unauthorized disclosure or use.

For more detailed information on the Volunteers for Children Act please log onto the National Foundation to Prevent Child Abuse Website at: <http://www.childsexualabuse.org/>

TRUTH IN SENTENCING

Since 1960 and 1993, violent crime in our country increased by 500%. A 1987 Justice Department study found that eight out of ten Americans will be victims of violent crime in their lifetimes. The Justice Department in 1990 measured six million violent crimes. However, since implementation of the 1994 Omnibus Anti-Crime Act, which offered financial incentives to States that adopted Truth In Sentencing standards, those numbers have fallen precipitously.

There are a lot of theories about which mix of family background and environmental conditions might influence a person to become a criminal. However, these theories always run headlong into the stubborn fact that most of the kids with similar backgrounds and similar environments do not become criminals themselves. What we do know is that year in and year out, our society, for whatever reason, produces a new crop of hard-core criminals. The government's paramount obligation is to protect law-abiding citizens from becoming their victims.

Criminologist Marvin Wolfgang compiled arrest records for every male born and raised in Philadelphia in 1945 and again in 1958. Just 7% of each age group committed two-thirds of all violent crime in the area, including three-fourths of the rapes and robberies, and virtually all of the murders. This 7% had five or more arrests by the age of 18, but for every arrest made, got away with about a dozen crimes. In an article based on Wolfgang's studies, it has been suggested that about 75,000 new, young, persistent criminal predators are added to our population every year.

In the early '80s, the United States Department of Justice funded projects in 20 cities where police, prosecutors, schools, and welfare and probation workers pooled information to focus on serious habitual offenders. As part of this program, the city of Oxnard, California worked to get its 30 active habitual offenders behind bars. As a direct result, in 1987 violent crimes dropped 38%,

more than double the drop in any other California city. By 1989, when all 30 active, serious habitual offenders were behind bars, murders declined by 60%, robberies by 41% and burglaries by 29%.

- ◆ In 1998, 68% of all convicted felons were sentenced to a period of confinement.
- ◆ Inmates released from prisons in 1998 had served 47% of their sentence in prison.
- ◆ Inmates released from state prisons in 1990 had served, on average, 1/3 of the sentence imposed on them by the court. In contrast, inmates released from state prisons in 1998 had served, on average, _ of the sentence imposed on them by the court.
- ◆ In 1990 the typical murderer was sentenced to a prison term of 20 years and 3 months, but only spent approximately 8 years and 9 (43% of imposed sentence) months in prison.
- ◆ In 1998 the typical murderer was sentenced to a prison term of 21 years and 9 months, but only spent approximately 11 years and 4 months or (52% of imposed sentence) in prison.⁴

The debate on whether we are imprisoning the right criminals is currently heating up. Of inmates incarcerated in state prisons in 1986, almost 55% were serving time for a violent offense. 29% were non-violent repeat criminals. In sum, 95% of all state inmates were either violent or repeat offenders.

It is time to make some changes. The one change that would have the greatest impact is the passage by states of truth-in-sentencing laws, which require convicted violent criminals to serve at least 85% of their sentences. The U.S. Congress enacted this kind of requirement for federal crimes in the mid-1980s, and Arizona passed similar legislation in 1993.

Ironically, those who benefit from such a law are never immediately visible. They are the young men and women who will live to adulthood, the women who are not raped, the store clerks who are not robbed, the children who are not murdered or molested. They are the non-victims of crimes that did not happen because the violent criminal who might have attacked them was behind bars.

For an in-depth look at Truth In Sentencing log onto the White House Policy Website at: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/policy/grants/doj-04.html>.

VICTIMS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT TO U.S. CONSTITUTION

We need a constitutional amendment that gives victims the same dignity, respect, and rights afforded the other players in the criminal justice system. A constitutional amendment for victims' rights includes three basic rights:

- ◆ The right to be informed;
- ◆ The right to be present;

⁴ October 2001, NCJ 190103

- ◆ The right to be heard throughout the criminal justice process.

A brief description of the evolution of America's criminal justice system explains the disparity in rights. At the dawn of our history, the colonies adopted the English common law tradition of private prosecutions that guaranteed crime victims the right to initiate and prosecute criminal cases. As the criminal justice system evolved, public prosecutors representing the interest of the state displaced private prosecutions, effectively excluding victims from participation. U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s expanded upon the rights of criminal defendants, thereby eliminating any semblance of balance for crime victims.

Every year, 43 million Americans are victimized by crime. Four amendments to the U.S. Constitution specifically address defendants' rights, yet crime victims are never mentioned. It is an unfortunate irony that constitutional rights created to protect the innocent now shield the guilty. If we treated offenders as shabbily as we treat victims, it would be considered cruel and unusual punishment.

A 1982 Presidential Task Force recommended that the United States Constitution specify fundamental rights for victims of crime. In April 1996, Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ), Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL) introduced the victims of crime constitutional amendment. On June 25, President Clinton endorsed victims' rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Twenty-seven states have amended their constitutions to include crime victim amendments, with an average approval rating of 80%. A 1991 national public opinion poll found that nine out of ten Americans support an amendment to their state's constitution that would increase victims' rights.

When high profile killers purchase their freedom and convicted baby murderers gain release after serving a minimal sentence, faith in the criminal justice system is undermined by a fear of retribution. When only 9% of reported violent crimes are resolved with the perpetrator being incarcerated, criminal justice is perceived as justice for criminals. When this perception infects the majority of innocent people, the process is eroded by a reluctance to cooperate, which fosters still more criminal activity. According to U.S. Attorney- General Janet Reno, "Our criminal justice system will never be truly just until victims of crime have as many rights as criminals."

We should never lightly amend the United States Constitution. However, victims of crime will never be fairly treated by a system that does not afford them equal fundamental rights, and that can only be achieved through constitutional amendment. Thomas Jefferson eloquently stated the need to occasionally modify the ultimate law of the land: "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered, and manners and opinions change; with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times."

TWO-STRIKE LAW FOR SEXUAL OFFENDERS

We have all heard the stories of men, often times fathers, who have been accused of child sexual abuse by vindictive ex-spouses. In certain circles, such tales have achieved the status of urban legend. Personally, I don't know if such stories are

true or not, but I do know that a two-strike law for sexual offenders directly addresses this issue. Certainly one can be falsely accused and possibly even falsely convicted of such crimes once, but not twice. By mandating life in prison only after a second conviction, one can be sure that our criminal justice system with its assemblage of checks and balances will protect innocent persons from this unfortunate but necessary fate.

A two-strike law for sexual offenders targets two specific types of offenders: pedophiles and psychopaths. By definition a pedophile is one who has a preference for having sex with children. If an individual pursuing sex with a child has been previously convicted of a sex crime against a child and the threat of another conviction and possible prison time is an inadequate control mechanism, then that person is a pedophile and must be removed from society.

A psychopath on the other hand is an individual who pursues instant self-gratification without consideration for the consequences of his action. Like the pedophile, a psychopath will commit crime with impunity until stopped. Pedophiles and psychopaths pose great threat to the safety of our children because they cannot control their actions.

There is not a documented case of a pedophile or a psychopath ever having been cured. The sad reality is that they re-offend over and over and over again until they are removed from society once and for all. State hospitals throughout America spent decades pursuing cures for pedophilia and psychopathy and they failed. Inevitably, the pedophile and psychopath will strike again and the victims will accumulate.

Of course, we have all heard about the abuse excuse wherein convicted sex offenders universally testify that their own decline into depravity began with their victimization as a child. I have no idea if the individual offenders are telling the truth or not, but I do believe that such testimony is instructive if we are going to create policy that will positively impact future generations.

The statistics underscore the need to take decisive steps to halt the destructive patterns of recidivist sex offenders against children⁵. Write your legislators and encourage them to support a two-strike law for sexual offenders. Thus far Wisconsin is the only state that has passed this legislation, but there is a federal version currently under consideration.

PROTECT OUR CHILDREN ACT

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a non-custodial family member or guardian in violation of custody agreement or decree takes more than 354,100 children each year. Some of these children will never get to see their families again.

⁵ *1 in 5 violent offenders serving time in a State prison reported having victimized a child.

*More than half the violent crimes committed against children involved victims age 12 or younger.

*7 in 10 offenders with child victims reported that they were imprisoned for a rape or sexual assault.

*Two-thirds of all prisoners convicted of rape or sexual assault had committed their crime against a child.

*Nearly two-thirds of rapists and sexual assaulters in State prison committed their crime against a child.

March 1996, NCJ-158625

*In a study of 571 pedophiles, the Washington Post revealed that each had molested an average of 300 victims

In 1999, Illinois Governor George Ryan signed a new law, appropriately named *Protect Our Children*, which mandates notification to schools in the event that an order of protection (or restraining order) is issued for a child due to abuse or neglect by a non-custodial parent or guardian. This new law is intended to prevent child abductions, stop domestic violence incidents from spilling over into schools, and can even be used to identify stalkers on college campuses. In the event that a child must be relocated for their safety, the child's parent may request the order not be made to secure their safety.

What started as a program to benefit schools in Livingston County now benefits more than 4000 Illinois schools!

For more information on the Protect Our Children law, log onto Bill author Jay Brainard's Website at: www.jaybrainard.com/ and select Jay's New Law.

PREVENTION FUNDING FOR AT RISK YOUTH

There are many battles to be fought in the war to make America safe for all children. However, America's current focus on stronger sentencing is really nothing more than a skirmish. We are also kidding ourselves if we think we can declare victory against crime by avoiding proven programs designed to give at-risk children a head start in life.

These solutions, as important as they are, only address the current generation of criminals. If other families are to be spared the pain mine has endured, policymakers need to look beyond the death penalty or prison sentences. Instead they must also focus on the critical steps our communities and nation can take to protect all children. This is the battlefield that will protect future generations from an epidemic of crime.

In America today, we can save thousands of children and adults if we invest now in proven programs that help kids get the right start and prevent them from becoming criminals in the first place.

The plain truth is that we ignore the most powerful weapons we have against crime. Programs like Head Start, parenting education; mentoring, job training, good schools, and after-school programs can dramatically reduce crime by helping kids become productive citizens instead of brutal criminals. For example:

High Scope Educational Research Foundation's Ferry Preschool study, which took place over two decades ago, combined a high-quality Head Start-style program for three- and four-year-olds with weekly home visits to coach their parents. High Scope randomly chose half the children who applied. Twenty-three years later, its researchers found that kids who took part in these programs were five times less likely to be chronic lawbreakers.

A Syracuse University Family Development Research Program showed that comprehensive early childhood services sharply cut subsequent delinquency. Kids in a comparison group that did not receive those services were ten times more likely to have a record of delinquency.

Other studies show that help for older kids can also significantly improve their - and our - chances. For example, when the Quantum Opportunities Program had high school kids participate in community service and gave them counseling, academic help, and financial incentives; it cut the risk of arrest by 50%.

If you do not trust the studies, ask America's police force. In a recent survey by criminologist Jack McDevitt, nine out of ten police chiefs said, "America could sharply reduce crime" if government invested in more of these Right Start programs. Asked which strategies would have the greatest long-term impact in reducing crime, police chiefs picked increasing investments in kids by a three-to-one margin over trying more juveniles as adults or even hiring more police officers.

Ultimately, programs like these actually save tax dollars while they save lives and property. For example, High Scope's Ferry Preschool saved \$148,000 in crime costs for every child served. Unfortunately, Right Start investments are so under-funded that they cannot begin to serve more than a small portion of the kids who need them. Vanderbilt University criminologist Mark Cohen estimates America would save \$1.5 million for each high-risk youngster diverted from a life of crime.

Don't get me wrong - we do need to get dangerous criminals off the street and behind bars. However, if we do not invest in programs that help children become caring citizens instead of brutal criminals, we will all pay an unfathomable cost in broken lives and broken hearts.

We cannot win the war against crime solely by focusing on prison construction and punishment. We will win the war on crime when we are ready to invest our time, energy, and tax dollars in America's most vulnerable children, so that they never become America's most wanted adults. Anything else is too little, too late.

By ignoring proven solutions, our policymakers are ignoring our most effective weapons in the war against crime. The way I see it that is being soft on crime.

CUT AND PASTE LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT LETTER

Date:

Inside Address

Dear _____:

1. As a parent (*citizen, constituent*) concerned with the welfare of children, I wish to impress upon you my feelings concerning (*legislative issue*).
 - ◆ I understand that you are a very busy person, but I am (*we are*) the parent(s) of (#) young children and (*am*) (*are*) greatly concerned about (*issue*).
 - ◆ I wish to share with you my views on the upcoming (*issue*) debate.
2. I believe that the primary duty of government is to protect innocent people. Therefore, it is incumbent on you, as my representative, to endorse legislation designed to provide for the public safety. This is why you must not only support legislation promoting (*issue*), but also encourage your peers to do the same.
 - ◆ Children are the most vulnerable members of society, and I feel that it is our duty to take whatever steps are necessary to protect their welfare. To that end I encourage you to support (*issue*). Only by sending the message that we will not tolerate aberrant behavior can we ensure that our children have ability to grow up into productive citizens.
 - ◆ I am closely watching and in support of the upcoming debate on (*issue*). I encourage you to use the power of your office to promote this important piece of legislation.
3. Please understand; there is no more time to lose. The future of (*state*) and America depends upon allowing all of our children to grow up into safe and productive citizens.
 - ◆ For far too long, we have abrogated the rights of our children and other innocent citizens for the rights of the wrong people. It is time to send a clear message that we will no longer tolerate deviate behavior.
 - ◆ The time has come to draw a line in the sand. As a concerned citizen, I encourage you stand up for the rights of and protect those who cannot protect themselves. We must take every step to ensure that the world we give to our children is safer and more secure than the world we live in today.
4. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I eagerly await your vote on this important issue.
 - ◆ Thank you for listening to my concerns. I know that like my friends, and me, you are working hard to create a safe and sane society.
 - ◆ I am sure that you understand the importance of this issue. Please consider my position carefully as you prepare to vote on this important issue.

To find out who your state representatives are and how to access them simply log onto the National Conference of State Legislators Website at: <http://www.ncsl.org/>, select State Legislatures, select Directory of State Legislatures. To find out who your Congressperson is log onto the United States Congress Website at:

<http://www.house.gov/writerep/> and follow the appropriate directions. Logging onto the United States Senate Website: <http://www.senate.gov> will produce similar results.