

When Your Child is Missing

Bringing community attention to your missing child



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Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

It is tremendously difficult when your child is still missing, the ground search concludes, and the public search center closes. At the conclusion of the public search, it becomes an ongoing challenge to keep the community focus on your missing child, and to keep your missing child before the media. What follows are some ideas about what your family and community can do to keep searching. Most of these ideas will be useful after an active search has concluded, but some can be incorporated into an active search as well.

The Laura Recovery Center is dedicated to supporting you in the continuing search for your missing child. You have probably tried everything conceivable to bring attention to the fact that your child is missing. We hope that the attached document will provide you with some new ideas or maybe a different way of renewing public awareness to help locate your child.

We have compiled ideas from several different people and sources as well as provided some original thoughts in an attempt to give you new strategies. Our hope is that something you find here will revitalize your search, stimulate media attention, and ultimately bring your child home.

We hope that this information helps at this terrible time. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family for the safe recovery of your child.

If we can assist you in any way please call at our toll free number 866-898-5823 or contact us by e-mail at info@lrcf.net.

Working together we can accomplish miracles.

Sincerely,

The Staff and Volunteers of the Laura Recovery Center

FLYER DISTRIBUTION

Places to Distribute and Post Flyers:

- Arcades, game rooms
- Ball fields
- Bars and nightclubs
- Bowling alleys
- Bus drivers
- Car dealers
- Car windows
- Clubs – bikers, snowboarders, RV
- Community events
- Dentist's and doctor's offices
- Flea market, county fair, livestock show and auctions
- Gas pumps at gas stations/convenience stores
- Ice cream trucks
- Malls/shopping centers
- Movie theaters
- Parks
- Pawn shops
- Pizza boxes
- Public restrooms on inside of stall doors – Walmart, public restaurants, rest stops, theaters, truck stops, etc. (must have permission)
- Public transportation waiting areas
- Realtors – local
- Restaurants (on take out containers or next to checkout)
- RV owners, parks, campsites
- Safety fairs & fingerprinting events
- Skating rinks
- Taxi drivers
- Toll booth operators

Places to Publish Flyers

- Advertising newspapers, i.e. American Classifieds, The Green Sheet, phone books
- Advertising supplements
- Business sale brochure/flyers
- Church programs/newsletters
- Event advertisements

- Magazines for special interests, i.e. Golf, camping, back-packing RV
- Newsletters of specialty organizations, i.e. Ranchers, hunters, fisherman, etc.
- Phone books
- Programs – local community theaters, high school performances, dance schools
- Realtor advertisements
- School web sites
- Social networking website (such as FaceBook, MySpace, Friendster, etc.)
- Sports events programs
- University newsletters

Other Uses for Flyers

- Billboards
- Bookmarks
- Bumper stickers (magnetic or adhesive)
- Business cards-back of: politicians, realtors, etc.
- Buttons
- Car magnet
- Flyers with flowers
- Forget-Me-Not flower seed packages attached to flyer
- Key chains
- Mardi Gras Beads
- Match book covers
- Place mats made with child's photo in middle and advertisers around edge
- Postage stamps with personal photos (private company)
- Poster displays on trucks using weather resistant paper
- Shopping cart flyers
- Small flyers on water bottles
- Standing posters for mall concourses
- Stickers with child's photo (various sizes for car/packages/letter, etc.)
- T-Shirt
- Tickets: back of-theater, zoo, museums, sporting events, etc.
- Tote bag

Flyer Suggestions

- Reduce flyer size to ½ or ¼ page to reduce cost & make them more adaptable for multiple uses
- Change orientation of flyer, i.e. photo on left side & info. on right
- Laminate for longer life & protection from weather
- Translate any information posted into languages spoken in your community.
- Alternate the wording on the heading

- (Missing; Help Find Me; Have You Seen Me?).
- Take advantage of holidays for distributing/posting flyers:
 - Valentine's Day: florists/jewelers
 - Easter: churches
 - Mother's Day: restaurants
 - Fourth of July: fireworks stands/parks
 - Halloween: trick or treat bags
 - Thanksgiving: grocery stores
 - Christmas: toy stores
 - Hunting season: sporting goods stores
 - Parade in town: along parade route

AWARENESS EVENTS

- Make a personal calendar and plan events to commemorate special dates.
- Register with your state's Missing Persons Clearing House
There is a Missing Persons Clearing House in each state. Many of them produce monthly bulletins that highlight missing children in the state. The family or law enforcement fills out forms to register with each state. *
- Angel trees with bells *
- Bubbles of Hope - Have a blowing bubbles day to remind the community about your missing child *
Do not use balloons - many birds and other wildlife die as a result of balloon releases
- Community Bell ringing **
- Candle Light Vigil *, **
- Festival of Lights
- Find <Your Child's Name> Day (Proclamation by city or state official)
- Fun runs - T-shirts with child's picture
- Planting a tree ceremony
- Prayer vigil at your child's or parent's church
- Ribbon campaigns (place on doors, trees, fences, car antennas, etc.)
- Vehicle Headlights On Day for <Your Child's Name>
- Radio stations all across the state can be asked to play your child's favorite song or a song selected by parents and have the song dedicated to the child.
- Hold a rally at the child's school with music and prayers.
- Organize a benefit dance and/or auction to help with search expenses
- Contact area sports teams to include photos and story in their programs and possibly have a Public Announcement made at games
- Dedication of a garden or a tree to your child
- Bowling tournaments, marathons, etc. dedicated to your child.
- Contact banks or local businesses to dedicate a Christmas tree/lights to your child.
- Have classmates do a letter writing campaign, writing to friends and families across the country telling about your missing child. Include your child's flyer.
- Organize a human chain linking communities school to school, house to church, etc. Radio stations can help organize the crowd. Ask sports celebrities to participate.
- Student march to distribute flyers.
- Banners on airplanes
- Photo collage/DVD display in malls or high traffic areas
- Community service – ask for court order to help distribute flyers
- FAX and e-mail the flyer from time to time, to keep your missing child, the investigation, and the reward in front of the community. Flyers posted to our web site can be e-mailed and FAXed at no charge.

- Multi-media presentation (photo display)
- Project child's picture on building at night
- Billboards - contact local billboard companies and ask for help getting your missing child's photograph and vital information on some billboards. Use billboards that are in appropriate locations to remind the community to keep searching for the missing child.
- Tie your child's interest to a local event (For example, if your child likes dogs – do a dog walk or run)
- Wishing star tree *

Candlelight Vigil - Specifics & Supplies

- Should last about 45 minutes
- Suggested locations:
(should be highly visible; attractive; easily accessible; large enough; comfortable)
 - park
 - city hall
 - at a memorial or statue
 - church
 - school
 - town square
- Have a rain location
- Advertising flyers/posters/banners
- Send out emails advertising event
- PA system (battery powered or make sure you have a source of power)
- Candles
- Matches/lighters
- Paper plates with slit cut or paper cups with hole in bottom
- Copy of permit, if necessary
- Be sure to take pictures and share with media
- Press coverage—enlist local media inc. student newspapers
- Invite civic /community groups/churches/businesses & any other organizations
- Meet with speakers to go over order of events
- Decide specific time to hand out & light candles
- Invite church or school choir

Community Bell Ringing

Draws the attention of the community
 Gives complimentary publicity to the cause
 Check with head of churches, temples, mosques, etc.
 Find out who is in charge of ringing bells
 Alert the media
 Set time/date for simultaneous ringing that all participants agree upon

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Press / Media Kit

As time passes, journalists who have covered your case may move away. New people move to the area, who may not know anything about your case. Write out the information (e.g. circumstances surrounding the abduction) you want disclosed. Verify this information with law enforcement first. Be sure that the missing child's photo (the most recent is best - and NOT a glamor shot) and a copy of the flyer is included. A local media person may be helpful in pulling this together. Share this with the investigator handling your case.

TV Talk Shows

Be careful - there are many TV "shows" that will ask the family to participate. Many of these "shows" are simply entertainment - and of little value to the search or the investigation. If the family chooses to do any of them, be aware that they are tremendously draining, and that some will feel like re-victimization. Be careful to discuss the thrust of the appearance thoroughly with the producer who calls, and ask ahead of time what the line of questioning will be, so that the family does not find themselves ripped apart by a ruthless host, or an unaware, insensitive, or unethical host. Find out who the other guests will be, whether they are people the family is comfortable appearing with, and what the rest of the show is about. Be sure that the focus of the show will be the missing child and that their photograph and information will be prominently displayed.

Radio Talk Shows

Appearances on local radio talk shows by parents (Radio can be done in-studio, by telephone, live or taped. Should be parent's choice.)

America's Most Wanted

- Usually only done with the support of law enforcement, to highlight new leads or turns in the investigation. Always work with your case investigator.

Unsolved Mysteries

This may be painful for the family, but a very useful media opportunity to remind a national audience of the missing child. This program will do a re-enactment of the abduction, to try to provoke new interest in and information about the case.

Fox News Network

Fox has a monthly one hour special on Missing Children - the format includes interviews. The focus is missing children.

May 25th - National Missing Children's Day

Find local or state events related to National Missing Children's day – there may be speaking opportunities which are often covered by the local media.

Anniversary Dates

The 3 month, 6 month, and annual anniversaries are good opportunities to get flyers out again and remind everyone about the reward. The first anniversary will be the easiest to get help with this, it gets harder as time passes.

Public Service Announcements

These are often aired in the wee hours of the morning - but you never know who is watching. Video a PSA (public service announcement) and ask local/national media to broadcast it.

EVENT PLANNING CHECK LIST

First Steps

- Determine the goals and objectives of the event
- Name an Event Coordinator to oversee the entire project
- Organize people resources by assigning tasks and responsibilities
(Team Leaders such as Site Coordinator, Media Coordinator, Publicity Coordinator, Logistics Coordinator, Speaker Coordinator, etc.)

Recruit volunteers

- gather materials
- put up flyers/posters
- set up
- pass out materials to participants
- clean up

Outline an agenda and time line for the event

- What kind of speakers or people resources are needed? How many?
- Who will moderate?
- What materials are needed?

Set an approximate date, time, location

- Avoid privately owned property like parking lots of shopping centers
(unless prior permission or permit is received).

Designate the Master of Ceremonies

- clergy; educator; family member; friend

Decide organizational details and approximate the cost of the event

- What will the location be? Indoor or outdoor? Area setup?
- Will you need microphones or audio-visual equipment?
- Who will obtain sponsors to defray cost of supplies, equipment, flyer/poster printing?

Publicize the event and notify media

- Flyer/poster should include: brief title, what, where (address &/or descriptive address), when, why, contact information
Should be printed in as large a font as possible
Display/pass out in high traffic areas including bookstores, malls, coffee houses, grocery stores, churches, schools, civic centers
- Prepare and distribute a News Release with the same information

Just before the event

- Refine, update the even time line
- Prepare things to do list
- Prepare lists of materials, supplies, and equipment to be taken to the event site and arrange for transport
- Prepare all identifying signs for the event
- Confirm with the media

At the time of the event

- Arrive 30 – 45 minutes early for set-up (signs, posters, etc.)
- Final check on room arrangements and facilities
- Final check on special equipment

After the event

- Follow-up media coverage
- Send thank-you letters
- Cleanup, pack up, and transport/return material and equipment.

ORGANIZING PEOPLE RESOURCES:

Event Coordinator

- Oversees all teams and the entire project, monitors teams' progress, and manages budget.
- Ensures that appropriate thank-yous are expressed to teams, everyone who participated, the site that hosted the event, volunteers, sponsors, media who covered story, and those who attended.

Site Team and Coordinator

- Secure a location and permit if necessary.
- Coordinate banners, handouts, chairs, tables, sound system, set up, etc.

Program Team and Coordinator

- Secure a speaker/s, moderator, and any other people needed for the event or program (clergy, educator, family member, friend).
- Coordinate the agenda.

Supply Acquisition Team and Coordinator

- Acquire, deliver, and set up supplies for the event including any audio and media systems, food, tables, etc.
- Secure donations and sponsors.

Publicity Team and Coordinator

- Design materials to promote the event and distribute materials.
- Visit and advertise in as many sites as possible. Target high traffic areas.
- Identify groups/people to invite.

Media Team and Coordinator

- Make a press list of contact names, news organizations, addresses, phone number, fax numbers, and email addresses.
- Prepare a press packet for distribution to press at event including press release, background information, and enlisting public help.
- Draft a media advisory that includes key points and facts to illustrate the significance of the event. Make follow-up calls.
- Prepare visuals for event for press (i.e. banners, photos, collages)
- Secure advanced media coverage and request media attendance at event.
- Meet with press before, during, and after event.
- Secure media coverage after the event. Contact local papers to run a post-event article.

RESOURCES

Assistance

- Laura Recovery Center for Missing Children, 1-866-898-5723, www.LRCF.org
- Laura Recovery Center Search Manual, www.LRCF.net/Manual
- Team HOPE, 1-866-305-4673, www.TeamHope.org.
Team H.O.P.E. (H.O.P.E. stands for Help Offering Parents Empowerment) is a program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. It is a federally funded parent support network for families of missing children as well as a support resource. Volunteers with Team HOPE have all had a missing child.
- Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations, www.AMECOInc.org
AMECO is an organization of member organizations in the United States and Canada who provide services to families with missing and exploited children.
- NamUs Missing Persons, www.FindTheMissing.org
Part of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, this site allows families and law enforcement to enter information about missing persons.
- NCMEC 1-800-843-5678, <http://www.MissingKids.com>
The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)
The Nation's Resource Center for Child Protection
- Missing Persons Clearinghouses, www.tinyurl.com/rvrvrq

Supplies

- Oriental Trading Company, Inc., www.orientaltrading.com (Mardi Gras beads)
- Forget-Me-Not Flowers from Clyde Robin Seed company, www.clyderobin.com
- Paper Plate Angels
www.marthastewart.com/good-thing/paper-plate-angels
www.funroom.com/holiday/pprangl.html
www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Angelplate.shtml
- Paper Stars
www.highhopes.com/5pointstar.html
www.highhopes.com/6pointstar.html
- Candle light vigil supplies
www.discountcandleshop.com
www.candles4less.com/candles/Church-and-Vigil-Candles
www.waxwizard.freesevers.com/vigil_candles.html
- Blowing Bubbles
www.zurqui.com/crinfocus/bubble/bubble.html
www.associatedcontent.com/article/231902/recipe_for_giant_soap_bubbles.html