



update

A Publication of the Texas Center for the Missing (formerly known as Gabriel's Gifts)/Fall 2006

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Formerly known as Gabriel's Gifts, the Texas Center for the Missing is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit offering help, and hope, to the missing and their families.



2nd Annual Charity Golf Tournament Raises \$30,000!



2006 Winning Team Sponsored by American Business Machines:
Kelley Chisholm, Mark Donnelly, Tom Lippincott, and Jason Williams

The 2nd Annual Charity Golf Tournament benefiting the Texas Center for the Missing was an incredible success—almost tripling last year's fundraising efforts. Over

\$30,000 was raised for safety prevention programs and the Houston Regional Amber Plan.

We would like to congratulate our winners: First and Second Place teams were both

sponsored by American Business Machines. Kelley Chisholm hit the Longest Drive and Chris Bumpous scored a Hole in One! We hope to see everyone again next year on October 9, 2007!

Thank you once again to all of our sponsors, players, and Golf Chairman Justin White. We truly appreciate your generosity and dedication!

White Hat Volunteer Fundraising Challenge

On November 24th, the Texas Center for the Missing kicked off its First Annual **White Hat Volunteer Challenge**. This campaign encourages volunteers to be "one of the good guys" and help raise funds for the Texas Center for the Missing and the Amber Alert.

More than \$1,300 has been received to date! Thank you to our dedicated volunteers and their friends and family who have participated!

Donations can be made by check or credit card or through PayPal via our website at: <http://www.tcftm.org/donation.asp>.

\$\$\$ Funding Needed \$\$\$:

The Texas Center for the Missing is precariously low on English Child ID kits and completely out of Spanish ID kits. Without dedicated funding we will have to suspend this program that provides ID kits to 10,000 children per year. Sponsorship opportunities are available.



Online Holiday Shopping.

If you shop online, access Amazon.com via the Texas Center for the Missing website (<http://www.tcftm.org/donation.asp>) and the Center

will receive a percentage of each sale. Your purchase costs no more to you personally yet benefits Texas Center for the Missing.

Spread holiday cheer to friends, family, and your community!

Houston Regional Amber Plan Marks Sixth Anniversary

Editorial, Beth Alberts, CEO.

This month the Houston Regional Amber Plan celebrates its sixth anniversary. I'm not sure that anyone involved in the planning and development realized at the time that they would be making history. Houston's was the first web-based, interactive Amber Plan in the country.

We have issued 61 Amber Alerts—the first on December 15, 2000—and safely recovered 57 children. While this should be cause for celebration, temper that with the knowledge that this vital program is struggling for funding. The Houston Regional Amber Plan relies solely on the efforts of the Texas Center for the Missing to raise the funds necessary to keep it in operation.

The good news is that the Amber Alert works. It is credited with saving the lives of 308 children in the United States.

The bad news is that the viability of Amber Alert programs, Houston's and others, is threatened not by mismanagement, not by complacency, but by a lack of sufficient funds to ensure that the program is maintained, that officers are trained in its use and that communities can count on it to be held to the highest standards and consistently administered across cases, jurisdictions, and time.



These efforts take commitment and leadership—and they take funds! A volunteer Board of Directors provides oversight of the program but it takes someone willing to be on call 24 hours per day, seven days per week to support it as an emergency alert system.

58,200 children are abducted each year in the United States by non-family members. I can't help but contrast this with our desire for increased protection from terrorists. If 58,000 U.S. citizens of any age were the targets of terrorists you can bet that the money to fight them would be there and it is!

Child predators *are* terrorists and they target our most vulnerable, our most innocent. They target our future, the citizenry most in need of our protection, our children.

Amber Plans have ushered in a new era, not only emphasizing child safety but adhering to that old saw "it takes a village..." by involving the citizenry in the quick, safe recovery of the child and the apprehension of the suspect.

So much has been done but there's so much more to do. There are no local, state, or federal funds devoted to this important mission. Nor do the general public, or most private funders, recognize the need to financially support the cause. Without funding, I fear we will compromise the integrity of this vital tool that research shows saves 100 young lives each year and, through education and disincentive to would-be predators, assuredly many more.

Those of us working on the front lines to keep our children safe and find them quickly want to do more for our children and our community. We want to save the world, one child at a time. We are willing to do the hard work—when needed, to actually wake up at 3:00 a.m. on Sunday, as I did earlier this week—all we are asking for is a little help. We need the community to support our efforts to keep this critical program alive and growing to meet an ever-increasing demand.

Contact Melissa Hulin at 713.314.3673 or mhulin@tcftm.org to learn how you can help.



HOUSTON REGIONAL AMBER PLAN

October ADVO Card Features a Houston Endangered Missing Child

ShopWise

Have you seen us?



Name: Jesus Martinez
DOB: 12/7/1999 Age: 6
HT: 3'0" (at age 4) WT: 30 lbs. (at age 4)
Hair: Black Eyes: Brown
Sex: M Date missing: 10/20/2004
From: Houston, TX



Last seen with: Avelino Martinez
DOB: 8/11/1973 Age: 33
HT: 5'8" WT: 215 lbs.
Hair: Black Eyes: Brown
Sex: M Date missing: 10/20/2004
From: Houston, TX

1-800-THE-LOST
(1-800-843-9678) (Hearing-impaired, call TDD 1-800-826-7653)
142 children featured have safely been recovered

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is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Please visit
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Volunteer Corner

•Did you know that Volunteer Mileage is Tax Deductible?

For 2006 and 2007, volunteer mileage is tax deductible at the rate of \$0.14 per mile. Visit www.irs.gov to learn more!

•Volunteer Hours for 2006 Set Record.

Texas Center for the Missing volunteers provided over 350 hours of volunteer time valued at over \$6,000! Thank you for your time and your talent!

Texas Center for the Missing Receives Humanitarian Award!

- **Texas Center for the Missing (TCM) Nominated by HPD.** TCM Founder, Doreen Wise, and CEO, Beth Alberts, have been awarded the *Houston Police Department's Humanitarian Service Award*. The ceremony celebrating this incredible achievement was held on December 14th at the Houston Police Academy. Special thanks to the dedicated officers in the HPD Juvenile/Missing Persons Division who nominated us!
- **Save the Date: April 22, 2007.** The 6th Annual Champagne Brunch benefiting the Texas Center for the Missing and honoring Special Agent Glenn Gregory of FBI-Houston's Violent Crimes Unit has been scheduled for April 22nd, 2007!
- **Save the Date: June 2, 2007.** The 1st Annual Charity Poker Tournament benefiting the Texas Center for the Missing is set for June 2007. Entry fees will be \$300 per player with a Grand Prize of \$10,000 for entry into the World Series of Poker in July 2007!
- **Save the Date: October 9, 2007.** The 3rd Annual Charity Golf Tournament benefiting the Texas Center for the Missing has been scheduled for October 9, 2007, at Wildcat Golf Club!
- **FVTC Brings Training to Houston.** The Dept. of Justice and Fox Valley Technical College are bringing two important trainings to the Houston area February 12 – 16, 2007—Child Abduction Response Team Training and Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children.
- **AMECO National Conference Held in Appleton, WI in October.** The Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations held its national conference October 18-21, 2006, in Appleton, Wisconsin. 150 people attended the conference to discuss best practices for nonprofit missing children's organizations and State Missing Persons Clearinghouses.



MySpace Asked to Remove Profiles of Over 30 Death Row Inmates

From the FamilyBadge, November 15, 2006. At first glance, the MySpace page of Randy Halprin, 29, of Livingston, Texas, is just a typical profile on the social networking site. It features a photograph of a smiling young man and dozens of blinking graphics of peace signs, goofy-looking aliens, and pop-culture images. The profile has 170 friends listed as of November 15, 2006.

It isn't apparent until reading the blog entries on his profile that Mr. Halprin is a convicted murderer, awaiting his execution on death row.

Mr. Halprin is one of the "Texas 7," a group of criminals that escaped from prison on Dec. 13, 2000. Of the escaped convicts, he was the youngest at 23, and serving the shortest sentence of 30 years for injury to a child. After escaping from prison, the seven were running low on funds, so they started on a spree of robberies, killing a police officer and injuring others. This landed all seven convicts on death row.

Since death row inmates do not have Internet access, the profiles on MySpace are created and hosted for them by friends and family. Some profiles feature blog posts which are transcribed from letters sent from jail.

Home to over 100 million profile pages, MySpace is also home to at least 34 profile pages of convicted death row inmates from the state of Texas alone, said Andy Kahan, director of the crime and victims office for Houston Mayor Bill White.

Outspoken in his opposition to the selling of "murderabilia" that profits convicted criminals, Mr. Kahan has been aware of web pages created by prisoners for years. But it wasn't until last week when he found the MySpace profile page of California serial killer Richard Ramirez that he realized the site hosted the pages of convicted killers.

Mr. Kahan sent a letter to MySpace last week asking them to take down pages created and maintained for convicted criminals. He also alerted local media

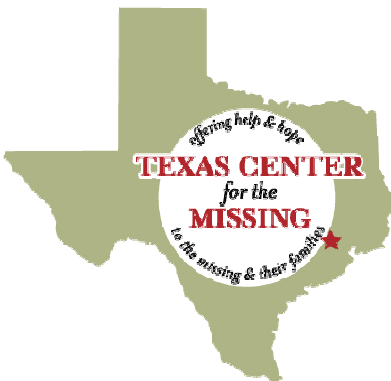
about the pages, igniting the latest free speech flap on the News Corp.-owned social networking site.

"As much as I'm a believer in the freedom of speech, you have to draw the line somewhere," said Mr. Kahan. "I asked MySpace to take the high road. You don't have to allow convicted killers on death row the opportunity to legitimize themselves and influence young minds."

Mr. Kahan spoke with MySpace reps on the phone Tuesday. They informed him that they would send an official statement regarding his inquiry next week. Hemanshu Nigam, MySpace chief security officer, said that the company has created software to block access to the site.

The software is available free of charge and can be used within prisons "so that not one additional dollar would have to be spent by the justice system to keep these individuals out of our community," he said in a statement. But this doesn't

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stop others from creating pages for convicts. "Unless you violate the terms of service or break the law, we don't step in the middle of free expression," Mr. Nigam said in a statement. "There's a lot on our site we don't approve of in terms of taste or ideas, but it's not our role to be censors. We are evaluating the profiles in question and will remove any that violates our terms of service."

The outing of death row inmate pages comes after Wired magazine senior editor Kevin Poulsen developed software able to find registered sex offenders on MySpace.

Since almost half the children in the U.S. use the Internet,

some find it necessary to police sites frequently visited by users under 18 years of age.

"It's not a question of saying that MySpace should be shut down," Mr. Poulsen said. "It's really just an issue of, if you're going to maintain [a site] like MySpace, you have a responsibility to police it. It's not clear that they're doing all they could," he said.

Mr. Kahan makes a similar argument about the convicted killers who have profiles on MySpace. Of course the death row inmates are not as directly harmful as free registered sex offenders who have easy contact with children and teenagers, he argues, but the harm caused by the profiles all falls into the glorification of

criminals. He worries that youth are easily impressionable, and said that the majority of friends on many of the convicted killer's pages are young women.

"(I am hoping for) guidelines within MySpace to prevent convicted felons [from] airing their thoughts and grievances for the world to see," said Mr. Kahan. He notes that it shouldn't be too hard to find the profiles, since he found 34 within the past week.

Since many death row prisoners live in Livingston, Texas, he says, inmate profiles were easy to find with a simple location search. "If I found them that quickly, imagine what some technological guru could do."

The Texas Center for the Missing is:

- **A Gathering Place** where those delivering services to the families of the missing find peers, share knowledge, and form collaborations.
- **An Incubator** of new training, technology, methods, organizations, programs, and projects.
- **A Rainmaker** mobilizing new resources to expand the capacity of organizations to find missing persons and support their families.
- **A Think Tank** scanning the horizon for new advancements, analyzing their potential applications, and communicating these to community partners and the public at large.

Donor Form

All donations are tax deductible.

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Please accept my gift of \$ _____ This donation is in honor / memory of _____

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