



Virginia Department of State Police

Virginia's Missing Children Clearinghouse

December 5, 2007

Dear School Principal and 5th Grade Teachers:

Did you know that more than 1.3 million children nationwide are reported missing each year? Fortunately, most of these children return home safely. Sadly, many do not. Law enforcement, citizens, and even children have been instrumental in keeping our youth safe and returning them home to their families, community, and school. Every year the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) pauses to commemorate the valiant efforts of the many organizations and individuals who are responsible for bringing our missing children home. On May 25, 2008, National Missing Children's Day, we focus our attention on children who have been recovered, as well as the children who are still missing.

Each year the Department of Justice sponsors a national poster contest and announces the winner at a ceremony held in Washington, DC. We ask you to join us in our efforts to educate children across the country about personal safety issues by giving Virginia's **5th grade students** an opportunity to participate in this poster contest. Each school division will select a winner who will go on to compete to become the statewide winner and represent Virginia in the national contest.

In Virginia, the statewide competition will be managed and coordinated by Virginia's Missing Children Clearinghouse. Ms. Ashley Presnell with Virginia's Missing Children Clearinghouse will coordinate and manage the statewide contest. Ms. Presnell can be reached at (804) 674-2265 or by e-mail at ashley.presnell@vsp.virginia.gov.

Virginia's Missing Children Clearinghouse will submit the single winning poster to the Department of Justice for final judging. A national judging will take place in April 2008, resulting in **one**, national poster contest winner. The national winner will travel to Washington, DC, accompanied by his/her teacher and parents to receive an award at the National Missing Children's Day Ceremony. This national winning poster will be used the following year as the pictorial theme for the 2009 Missing Children's Day.

This year's theme is "**Bringing Our Missing Children Home.**" On January 13, 2008, Virginia will recognize national A.M.B.E.R. Alert Awareness Day, which would be an opportune time to launch your school's poster contest. We also encourage schools to use the poster contest as an opportunity to engage children in learning about and discussing personal safety. Available at <http://www.vsp.virginia.gov/MissingChildrenPosterContest.shtm> are the following contest

materials to help you plan and execute your school's poster contest:

- A fact sheet (with rules, judging criteria, and important dates)
- An application form to accompany each poster
- A sample flyer that can be displayed in the halls of your school
- A certificate template that can be completed by the local school and distributed to each student that participates in the contest.
- A letter to 5th Graders

Additionally, the following websites may be of benefit for classroom instruction:

<http://www.netsmartz.org/educators.htm>

www.pollyklass.com

<http://www.gosap.state.va.us/preventioncomesfirst.htm>

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ms. Ashley Presnell, Virginia State Police, at (804) 674-2265 or by e-mail at ashley.presnell@vsp.virginia.gov. We look forward to receiving an entry from each school division and hope that your school will join in this exciting and important national competition.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and support. Together we can insure the safety and security of children across the country.

Sincerely,



Lieutenant Pete Fagan
Virginia's Missing Children Clearinghouse Manager
Virginia State Police



Colonel W. Steven Flaherty
Superintendent
Virginia State Police