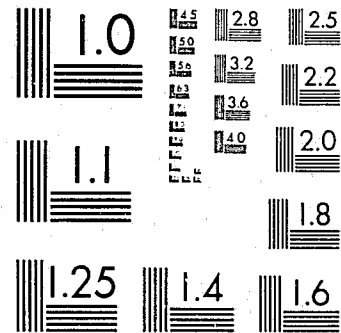


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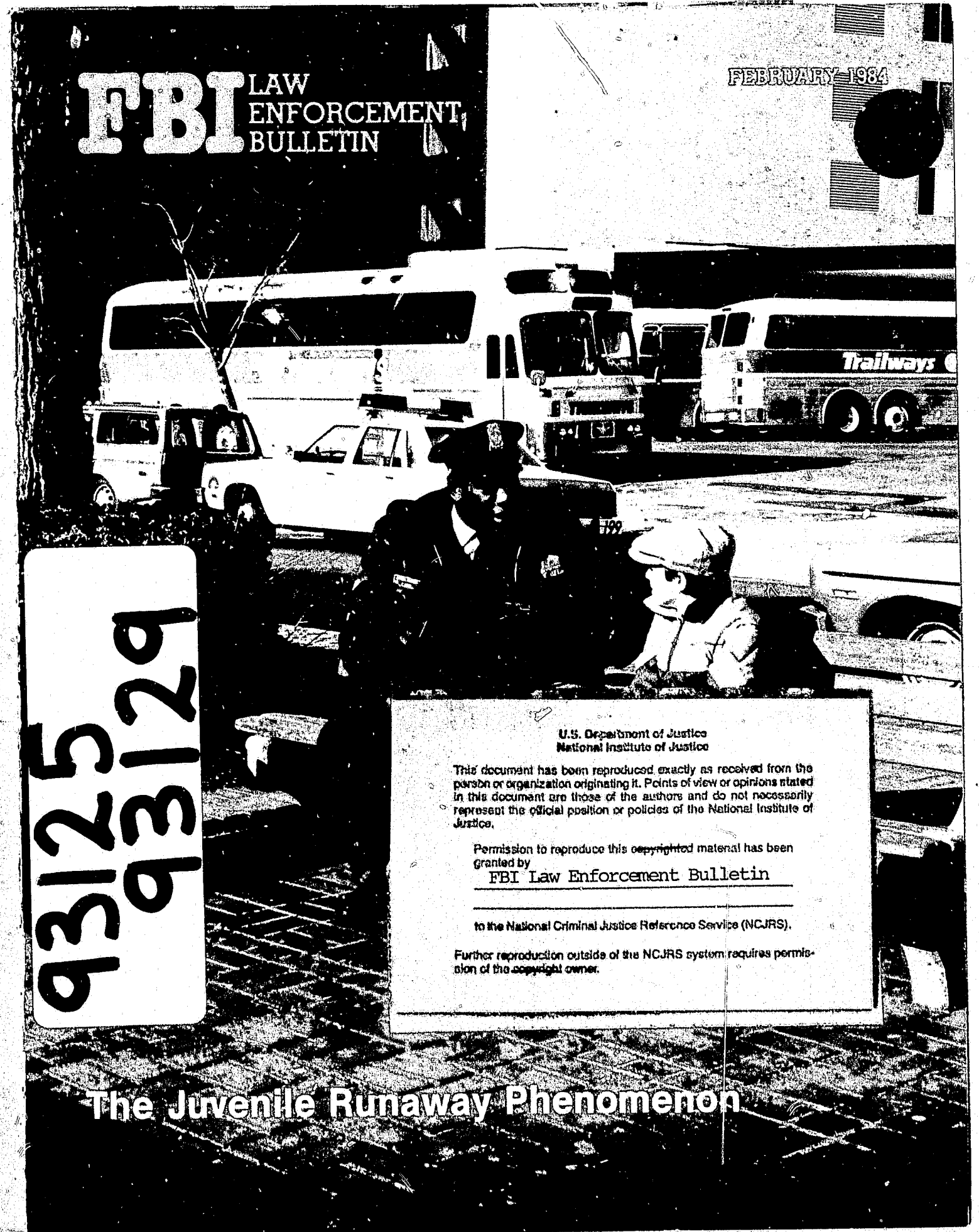
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MAR 2 1984

ACQUISITIONS

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William H. Webster, Director

The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of the Department of Justice. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through June 6, 1988.



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THE COVER: A law enforcement agency has implemented a unique program designed to deal with juvenile runaways. See article p. 1.

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93124



"McGruff"—Crime Prevention Coalition

By
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Chief
and
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American Fork, Utah

Are You Raising a Victim?

"Experience has shown that most victimized children are those who are uneducated on methods of self-protection."

- The body of an 11-year-old Ogden, Utah, girl is found bludgeoned to death in a shed near her home.
- A 4-year-old boy has never been located since his kidnaping in a store a few aisles away from his grandparents.
- The badly decomposed body of a sexually molested 3-year-old girl is found weeks after being kidnaped from her neighborhood.
- The search ended for a 2-year-old girl when her body was found sexually assaulted and stuffed in an attic recess of a building that was under construction.

As a result of media coverage of the above incidents in Utah, public awareness of the problems of child assault and kidnaping has risen to almost panic level. Frightened and anxious parents are turning to the only source they know for help—the police—with a desperate plea that they "do something!"

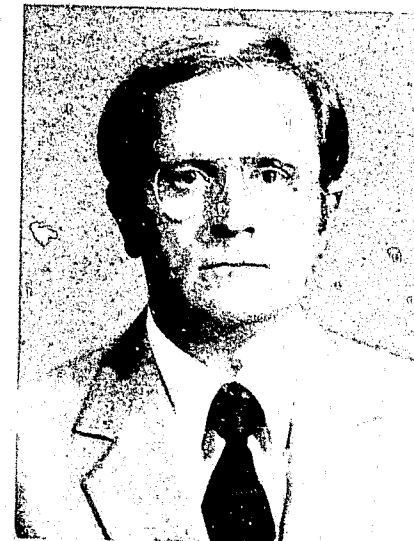
Utah is no different from any other State in experiencing an increase in the number and frequency of child molestations and kidnapings.

However, law enforcement agencies across the country have been unprepared for the intense public pressure being exerted on them to solve the problem.

In answer to this pressure, several Utah police departments conducted massive fingerprinting sessions during which thousands of parents had their preschool and school-age children fingerprinted. This effort left many parents with a false sense of security, believing that their fingerprinted child was now somehow immune to the danger of being kidnaped.

This quick-fix solution was only a temporary measure taken to satisfy public demand. It does, however, illustrate a common plight of many police departments. Despite the obvious need, more thorough and effective crime prevention programs cannot survive the fight for adequate manpower and budget when department salaries, equipment, and operating costs are in the balance.

Most police administrators would like to develop and promote effective crime prevention programs in their jurisdictions, but they lack the necessary resources. To implement an effective, low-cost crime prevention program that does not require many man-hours to maintain would benefit the police department while satisfying a public need. However, a program to



Chief Johnson



Officer Johnson

meet all these criteria is difficult to find.

One agency, American Fork, Utah, Police Department, has been successful in incorporating all these necessary elements in a program designed to combat the problems of sexual assault and kidnaping in its area.

American Fork was also under pressure from its citizens to find an immediate solution. The administrators could see that mass fingerprinting was only a surface solution for the problem. Rather than simply offering a "dead-body identification service," a four-phase prevention and public education program was implemented.

Department administrators reasoned that the only viable solution was to educate potential victims on preventive methods rather than pursue the unlikely alternative—to identify, apprehend, and successfully convict all possible child molesters and kidnapers before they could victimize another child.

Experience has shown that most victimized children are those who are uneducated on methods of self-protection. Far fewer children who are cognizant of possible assaults are actually victimized. These children are able to recognize and avoid assault and/or kidnaping situations. The procedures, as well as the importance of instructing children about self-protection, should be stressed to parents. Although the primary responsibility for teaching children should rest with the parents, reinforcement from the police department and school system is also

a necessary part of the program. With this in mind, the American Fork Police Department, operating on limited funds and manpower, promoted a four-phase plan.

Phase I—Parent Education

Working through the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) in the city, public seminars on self-protection for children were conducted at each elementary school. This lecture topic was virtually unheard of anywhere else in the State. Newspaper notices were placed in the public service columns of local newspapers, inviting any interested adults to attend the seminars. Flyers, typed and reproduced by the PTA, were sent home with each school-age child to inform their parents of meetings scheduled in their area. Even though scheduled meetings competed with the World Series on television, an average of 150 persons attended each of the seminars.

The majority of the first meeting was spent in delivering the main lecture—Are You Raising a Victim?—to teach parents how to instruct their children on self-protection, along with methods for physical resistance. The parents were then introduced to the four phases of the program—parent education, "safe house" system, child education, and program maintenance. At this time, they were also given a proper perspective on the value of fingerprinting children as only a small part of a necessary overall program to educate their family.

A topic thoroughly discussed in this program was the "stranger danger" concept. Most parents do not realize that most children think of a stranger as a "big mean man." A child does not consider a "nice" person as a "stranger," because only

A display of teaching aids parents can use to teach children self-protection concepts.

unshaven, unkempt, bad-tempered men fit his image of a stranger. Parents are therefore taught to discuss self-protection in terms of unacceptable behavior rather than unacceptable people. In this way, children will be prepared to respond to assaults by strangers, as well as to the much more common "trusted adult" assaults.

Other subjects discussed during phase I include family code words (a way to alert children to get help without going into lengthy explanations when time will not permit), home security and the safest methods for children to use when answering the door and telephone, ways to teach toddlers street safety, and various baby-sitting rules for children and babysitters to follow. Parents are given ideas for visual aids and activities for different age groups to reinforce instruction and are advised as to what methods and terminology children are most responsive.

Related juvenile problems such as drug abuse, vandalism, "at school" extortion, and teenage sex offenses are also discussed. Parents are taught how they should react if their child becomes a victim. Finally, parents are shown how to prepare an identification kit annually for each of their children, including fingerprints (or palm and footprints of young children), description, recent photographs, blood type, and hair sample (including the hair root).

Free fingerprint services are offered to interested families by the police department, and instructions are furnished to the parents on taking flat palm, foot, and fingerprints at home. Parents are encouraged to update the fingerprints and photographs yearly until their children are teenagers.



The parents who have attended these meetings are extremely receptive and complimentary of the material presented in the lecture, often expressing their belief that this program is indeed a viable crime deterrent.

Phase II—"Safe House" System

Working through the Utah Crime Prevention Council, "McGruff" posters¹ were obtained through PTA funds at a minimal cost. These posters were distributed to homes of volunteers who had been screened by both the PTA and the police department. The "McGruff" poster was adopted, as opposed to other "safe house" symbols, for several reasons, including:

- 1) The poster is a bright, multicolored design that is easy to see from the street when placed in a front window;
- 2) The color and high quality of this poster is difficult to reproduce illicitly, as opposed to single-color, line-drawn safe house signs that could be duplicated on a copy machine; and
- 3) It is believed that within 5 years, the "McGruff" dog as a symbol for safety and crime prevention will be as familiar to children as Smokey the Bear is now.



Enthusiastic parents discuss what they have learned from the lecture regarding how to teach children self-protection.

Utah has officially adopted the "McGruff" poster as the State safe house symbol. This enables a child visiting another city to recognize a safe house even though he is unfamiliar with the neighborhood. The adoption of a statewide symbol was prompted by the fact that in Utah, there are currently almost as many safe house symbols in use as there are cities using them. It would be impossible for a child in an unfamiliar city to recognize all the various safe house symbols now being used.

"... an effective low-cost, crime prevention program that does not require many man-hours to maintain will benefit the police department while satisfying a public need."

Police officer and "McGruff" explain the safe house program to a group of elementary school children.



Citizens who volunteer to participate in the safe house program are instructed to act as a temporary shelter for children fleeing imminent danger, to observe any suspects pointed out by the child, and to call the police, as well as the child's parents. Citizens are also advised not to leave their doors unlocked, but to be especially alert during school hours, although they do not have to remain at home during any certain hours of the day. Because so little is required of participants in this program, more people are willing to offer their homes as safe houses.

A safe house system is considered an important part of the department's four-phase program. In the short period since its implementation in American Fork, the safe house program has been responsible for one potential offender aborting his attempt. While being followed home from school, a victim ran toward a home displaying a "McGruff" poster, at which point the person following this child immediately left the area to

avoid apprehension. Similar results have been reported in other communities using a safe house system.

Phase III—Child Education

Uniformed police officers meet with children in elementary schools using three formats, each geared to the understanding of different age groups. They first meet with children in kindergarten through second grade to present a short lecture and an age-specific filmstrip. "Mr. McGruff"—an officer dressed in a high-quality McGruff costume furnished by the State crime prevention office—also makes an appearance. The costume is furnished at no cost to police agencies on a short term basis.

A second film and lecture presentation on a higher level is given to third and fourth graders, and a third presentation is made to fifth and sixth graders. This also includes a film, an appearance by "Mr. McGruff," and lecture material suitable to the age group.

The films selected for these presentations are "technically correct" in that the child actors realistically solve personal safety problems rather than being rescued by an animated character, as is typical in other children's safety films. The film used for the older children incorporates discussion breaks between sequences to allow students to express their opinions and beliefs. Based on the police department's recommendation, both films were purchased by the school district through their public safety education funds.

Phase III also involves presenting lectures to secondary schools during three 1-hour sessions. Male students



"McGruff" shakes the hands of his admirers.

“... the increase in child molestations and kidnapings across the Nation can be combated.”

learn about local crime problems, vandalism, drug abuse, homosexual solicitation, and sibling safety. Female students are taught about self-protection for women, babysitting safety rules, and home security. These presentations have been received so well by the American Fork students that several communities have requested the material be presented in their school systems as well.

Phase IV—Program Maintenance

The police department meets annually with incoming elementary students to educate them regarding the function of the police department, the use of safe houses, and various self-protection principles. The department encourages parents to reinforce this information through home education.

Program Costs

Since all financial expenses are covered by the school district and the PTA, the only expense incurred by the police department is the salary of the officers who participate in the program. Man-hours spent to present this program include:

- 1) Phase I, using one officer—1.5 hours/meeting;
- 2) Phase II—safe house program—(administered by PTA);
- 3) Phase III—student education meetings (using two officers—three hours per school)—6 hours/school; and
- 4) Phase IV—program maintenance (using two officers—1 hour/school) (not to be implemented until next year).

Control and distribution of the “McGruff” posters is handled by PTA volunteers. To deter abuse of the program, each poster is numbered individually and assigned to a specific family.

School district and PTA costs include copying expenses for handouts furnished at lectures, “McGruff” posters at .25 cents per poster, purchase of a filmstrip (about \$80), and purchase of one film (about \$250).

Phases I through III were completed in American Fork within 4 weeks, including distribution of “McGruff” posters by PTA volunteers.

Conclusion

Because aborted kidnaping attempts have usually been stopped by the victim himself, the best deterrent to this crime, as well as to sexual abuse in any form, is to educate the child on how to recognize, avoid, and if necessary, effectively resist an assault or kidnaping. This education can be conducted to a certain extent in the schools; however, an occasional lecture by a visiting police officer is not sufficient to educate children thoroughly on this subject. The responsibility must ultimately lie with the parents, who should be taught to furnish a positive and continual learning environment for their children.

How much public interest is there in a parent training program furnished by police agencies? The positive feedback and requests for information generated by the American Fork program indicate strong public support for this type of education. As a result of the program's widespread popularity, the American Fork Police Department has been approached by the Child Industries Organization for permission to distribute the material to

many interested agencies and institutions across the United States. The numerous requests for such a program illustrate the great need felt by our Nation's communities for training materials on this topic.

Even though the desire is great on the part of parents to teach their children how to avoid becoming victims of assault, resources do not exist to assist them in this effort. Unfortunately, most parents do not know what, how, or even when to teach their children about such matters. For this reason, the police department can furnish a valuable and needed service in teaching parents on how to educate their children on personal safety.

Experience with this program has shown that in exchange for minimal officer participation, the police department will see immediate benefits in the form of positive media attention, a higher crime reporting rate, a progressively lower crime rate, and an educated public prepared to meet a common and ever-increasing crime problem.

The fact remains that the increase in child molestations and kidnapings across the Nation can be combated. Parents need not live in daily fear for their children, and police departments need not endure public pressure in dealing with this problem. Rather, law enforcement can effectively take the offensive to meet public demand to “do something” by organizing parents and communities in a cooperative, meaningful effort of crime prevention that works! **FBI**

Footnote

Crime Prevention Coalition has given permission to the State of Utah to use “McGruff” as the official safe house symbol.

END