

REMARKS

OF

MARY LOU LEARY  
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY CEREMONY

ON

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2013  
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Bob [Listenbee]. I'm thrilled to be here to help commemorate National Missing Children's Day and to recognize these extraordinary individuals for their service to our nation's children.

I'm delighted that the Acting Associate Attorney General is with us to present the awards. Tony West has been a huge supporter of our work to protect children, and it's an honor to have him here today. I'm also very glad to welcome John Ryan and Heather Bish. We're very pleased to have you both with us.

Finally, let me thank Bob, Melodee Hanes, and the terrific staff at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – especially Lou Ann Holland – for bringing us together today, and for the work they do every day to make America a better place for its children.

I want to take this opportunity not only to congratulate our honorees, but to thank all of you – everyone here – for your commitment to finding missing, abducted, and exploited children. I've spent much of my career working to strengthen our responses to victims, and I'm always amazed by the dedication of child advocates, whether they work in a child advocacy center, a missing children's clearinghouse, a law enforcement agency, or as a volunteer in the community.

These cases are so wrenching and so difficult. They're painful, not just for the families, but for the professionals who become involved. As one agent said about the events in Cleveland, "Yes, law enforcement professionals do cry." It takes someone exceptional to take on these cases and work them through to the end. So, to all of you who spend your days working to find missing children, we're grateful for everything you do and we're proud to stand beside you.

It's my privilege now to introduce our next speaker.

In the two years he's served as Acting Associate Attorney General, Tony West has helped lead the Department of Justice in its work to protect children. He's been a big supporter of my office's work and a particularly strong advocate for the work OJJDP is doing. As a reflection of his commitment to child protection, the Attorney General recently asked him to lead a national task force to address children exposed to violence in Indian country.

He's a tremendous ally, and a friend to all of us who care about the safety of our children. Please welcome Acting Associate Attorney General Tony West.

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