



# Department of Justice

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OPA  
(202) 514- 2007  
TTY (866) 544-5309

## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZES FLORIDA DETECTIVES WITH MISSING CHILDREN'S CHILD PROTECTION AWARD**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today honored six detectives of the Child Exploitation Unit of the Volusia County Sheriff's Office in Daytona Beach, Florida, for their investigation that resulted in the timely arrest of a child sexual predator and pornographer. The suspect, who admitted to victimizing at least three children, was with young children at the time of his arrest.

The detectives received the Missing Children's Child Protection Award, which was announced as part of the 37th annual commemoration of National Missing Children's Day. This award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of law enforcement officers who have made a significant investigative or program contribution to protecting children from abuse or victimization.

"The quick thinking and actions of these detectives resulted in the rescue of two little children — in a matter of hours — from the control of an evil person," said Katharine T. Sullivan, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs. "No longer will this man be able to exploit and hurt them, or other children. The Department of Justice applauds these officers' successful work to bring him to justice."

The officers recognized are:

- Detective Chastity Burke
- Detective Dennis Miller
- Detective Keith Earney
- Detective Jason Turner
- Detective Ruben Escobar
- Detective Eugene Mefford

On May 30, 2019, the North Florida ICAC Task Force informed the Volusia County Sheriff's Office that a suspect had approached an individual online about participating in sexual activities with very young children. The suspect said he would be alone with his nieces, ages 3 and 4, on May 31. The detectives used the suspect's screen name to identify and locate him, and to execute a search warrant at the residence. Within six hours, they found the suspect with the children and identified them as subjects in a disturbing video. The suspect's phone revealed hundreds of pornographic images and videos, and the detectives arrested him for child

molestation and possession of child pornography.

“The vigilance of this law enforcement unit proves there is a critical need for dedicated and timely investigative work in the fight to stop those who would hurt children, society’s most defenseless,” said Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Administrator Caren Harp. “The Justice Department commends the Child Exploitation Unit of the Volusia County Sheriff’s Office for bringing this sex offender to justice and for its commitment to stopping further child victimization.”

The department also recognized three other law enforcement officers in Wisconsin and Louisiana, as well as a school bus driver from Florida, for their efforts to find missing children and bring child sexual predators and child pornographers to justice. The department declared Elliana Conrad, a fifth-grader at the Antonia Crater Elementary School in Newberg, Oregon, winner of the 2020 National Missing Children’s Day poster contest.

Due to restrictions resulting from COVID-19, the in-person ceremony to honor the recipients has been canceled. Instead, this [website](#) features information about the awardees and statements from Office of Justice Programs Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Administrator Caren Harp.

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan, provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation’s capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. More information about OJP and its components is located at [www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov).

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at [www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years](http://www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years).

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