



June 20, 2018

Protect Your Children From Abduction

Each year, around 1 million children are reported missing throughout the United States. Of these, more than 100,000 children are missing for an extended period of time.

Reverend Ira Acree - a West Side Pastor – had his very own niece become one of our nation’s missing persons. Rev. Acree’s niece Yasmin Acree, who disappeared 10 years ago, was a 15-year-old honor student at the time. Yasmin disappeared on MLK Day in 2008, something her uncle now calls cruel irony. She was living in the Austin neighborhood with her aunt who had adopted her. After spending the day at the West Lawndale YMCA, Yasmin was dropped off at home around 8 p.m. on January 16, 2008. She was never seen by her family again.

We will be setting up a program much like the Guardian Angels on the West Side. We are working with Shannon D. Callahan, a member of New Yerusalem Lodge #158 F & A. We will be meeting with Police Supt. Eddie Johnson to put a program in place.

What parents should teach their children:

Remind your children to never ride with strangers under any circumstances. Teach them specific procedures about who will pick them up at school in case of an emergency. Use a code word that only you and your children know.

Tell your children that not all adults are good people. Any time a stranger approaches them, your children should yell "Help" and then leave the situation by going toward other adults or a group of friends. Remind your children: Adults should ask other adults for help, not children. Your children should be taught to reply, "I do not talk to strangers".

Impress upon your children that they should tell you immediately if anyone or any incident has made them feel uncomfortable, especially if it involves touching.

Remind your children not to play in isolated areas, to always travel in groups with friends, and to never travel or go to the bathroom alone or in the dark.

Teach your children how to lock and unlock doors and windows.

Teach your children what to do if they become separated from you at the grocery store, zoo, museum or any other place away from home. ACT IT OUT with your children, so they know exactly what to do.

Tell your children never to take candy, toys or money from strangers.

Help your children learn their address and telephone number, including area code.

Help your children memorize emergency phone numbers.

Parents should review their school's absence policy. Ask the school to call immediately if your children are absent without an excuse.

Keep up to date photographs of your children with their ages, heights, weights, etc. written on the back. A current digital recording of your children is even better.

Have the police fingerprint your children. Do not use home fingerprinting kits, as they are not accurate. Keep several copies of your children's fingerprints in a safe place at home.

Do not put your children's names on the outside of clothing. This prevents a stranger from addressing them by name and acting like they know them.

Record your children's birthmarks, moles, warts, scars and distinctive characteristics.

Let's keep our children safe! Here are some resources:

Missing & Exploited Children (800) The Lost (843-5678) - www.missingkids.com

Team Hope (Parental Support Group) (866) 305-HOPE (4673) - www.missingkids.com/teamhope

Illinois Amber Alert (800) 843-5763 - www.amberillinois.org Email missing@isp.state.il.us

Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations - www.amecoinc.org

National Missing and Unidentified Persons System - www.namus.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'La Shawn K. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District