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Where innovation and safety meet

Radio station's booth offers kids' info CDs just in case

By Jason Newell, Staff Writer
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ONTARIO - The little booth at Ontario International Airport had something to make both Joseph Giao and his aunt happy.

For him, it was the chance to perform for a digital camera and get a hands-on look at some high-tech gadgets. For her, it was the peace of mind in knowing she'd be prepared if her nephew ever went missing.

As they walked away, Vanny Mean, the 11-year-old boy's aunt, held a small ID card and a miniature CD loaded with key bits of information that could someday help law enforcement officials track her nephew down.

"He's all over the place," said Mean, a Rialto woman who works at the airport. "Not that he's going to get kidnapped or anything. I'm just scared someday we might go somewhere and he might get lost."

Run by a local radio station, the booth offered the free digital IDs to parents throughout the day as part of the airport's Wellness/Safety and Lifestyle Fiesta.

For each child, employees from NewsTalk 590 KTIE-AM collected key bits of information, such as name, address and identifying features. They recorded the child's voice and movements with a digital camera. And they scanned fingerprints into a computer using state-of-the-art technology.

Each child's information, footage and fingerprint scans were loaded onto a small CD, then given to their parents for safekeeping.

"God forbid, if the child ever goes missing, they give that immediately to the police, so the police have audio, video and all the information," said Pamela Tyus, the radio station's director of promotions.

Each CD is encrypted, ensuring that only police agencies are able to access key information, Tyus said. To ensure privacy, the radio station shreds any paper documents and deletes all computer files once the IDs are created.

Ron Stark, general sales manager for the station, said KTIE purchased the technology about six months ago from SafeAssured, a Wisconsin-based company that created the identification system.

Since then, the station has offered the service at about six different community events – putting together IDs for more than 250 children, Stark said.

"We come out to a lot of events and didn't feel good about just handing out bumper stickers. How impactful is a bumper sticker?" he asked. "We wanted to do something that would make a difference in people's lives."

The radio station plans to continue offering the free service at future events. The eventual goal is to make IDs for every child in the Inland Empire, Stark said.

Future locations will be posted on the station's Web site, www.590ktie.com.

"If just one kid is saved, it's all worthwhile," Stark said.

Robbie Reyes, who brought her granddaughter, Hailie, to the booth Thursday morning, said she was glad to have something that would add another layer of safety for her family. The process was pretty simple, despite the potential challenges of getting a 2-year-old to speak into a camera, she said.

"She didn't know what this was all about, but once they started talking to her she got into it," the Rancho Cucamonga woman said.

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