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## High-tech safety for kids Port school is first in area to offer ID disks to be used in case of abduction



Dunwiddie Elementary School Principal Diane Johnson held a small CD like the ones that will be used to record personal information about students to be used if a child is abducted or goes missing. Students (from left) Caitlin Luib, Elaina Wickmann and Tanner Saver got a sneak peak at the SafeAssured ID disk Tuesday. Photo by Bill Schanen IV

By BILL SCHANEN IV  
Ozaukee Press staff  
Posted 9-27-06

A Port Washington elementary school is taking a high-tech approach to protecting its students by offering to create digital identification disks for every child that could be used by authorities if the children are abducted or go missing.

Working with its parent group and Port Washington State Bank, Dunwiddie Elementary School will be the first school in southeastern Wisconsin to offer the SafeAssured ID program. Organizers said they hope the pilot program, which will be free for all 281 students at the school, will eventually be expanded throughout the school district and county.

Each mini CD includes a child's digital fingerprints, photograph, streaming video showing mannerisms and gait, an audio recording of the child talking, physical description, personal information such as address, birth date, medical conditions and identifying marks and a family code word.

All but the most basic information is encrypted. While even parents cannot access it, authorities will be able to decode it if needed.

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Developed by a Wausau company, the program is designed to complement national child tracking systems such as Amber Alert by providing parents with a ready source of information about their children that can be turned over to authorities in case of emergency.

"In Port, we had the Phillips boy go missing. In Milwaukee, two young boys disappeared and old photos were being used to help find these children," said Bill Penkwitz, a member of the Dunwiddie Parent Connection that has spearheaded the effort to offer SafeAssured ID at the school.

Penkwitz referred to Jeffrey Phillips, the 14-year-old Town of Port Washington boy who was last seen after leaving a friend's house June 29. His body was found in Sauk Creek July 12. Authorities have ruled his death accidental.

"This program puts all the information law enforcement needs to find a child on one small disk that parents keep and turn over to authorities if needed," Penkwitz said. "I'd love to see all Dunwiddie students take advantage of this."

Penkwitz learned about the program through an unrelated business deal with the founder of SafeAssured ID and was immediately intrigued by the concept of offering the program locally as a parent group fund-raiser.

But both the parent group and school officials were concerned the \$20-per-disk cost would be a disincentive for some parents.

"I don't want everything to be about fund-raising, especially not an important program like this," Dunwiddie Elementary School Principal Diane Johnson said. "Our parents do so much for this school that I want to be able to give something back to them. With the help of the parent group and Port State Bank, we're able to offer this program to them free."

Penkwitz approached Port Washington State Bank, which has agreed to pay to have disks made for every child at Dunwiddie Elementary School. The cost of the program is expected to be between \$4,000 and \$5,000, he said.

"We've done this type of thing in the past with offering fingerprinting and photographs of children, but this program takes it to a whole other level. It's very high-tech, and knowing it hasn't been used before in southeastern Wisconsin, we were very intrigued," said Todd Luft, vice president/director of marketing for the bank.

"Our philosophy is that this is a great resource to protect children and we want to protect everybody, not just the children of parents who can afford it," he said. "If not a single one of these disks is ever needed, great. But if it is and just one child was found, think about how huge that would be."

Success will be determined by the number of Dunwiddie parents who opt to have their children participate. Although organizers expect significant participation, they are mindful of privacy concerns and said they have been assured the information collected on the disks is secure.

"There is no data base of information that is maintained. The only people who have the data are the parents, and even they can't see most of it because it's encrypted," said Penkwitz, who noted that any paper information used in the process of creating the disk is shredded.

Johnson said, "Parents are the only ones who have the information and it's not like if the disk is lost someone else can see what's on it."

Students whose parents choose to participate in the program will have their information recorded at school Oct. 30 through Nov. 2 by parent volunteers using a SafeAssured ID kit.

Although the program is only being offered free for Dunwiddie Elementary Students, siblings of students at the school can participate for a \$10 fee. The parent group is also accepting donations, which will be used for school projects.

"We consider this a pilot program that, if successful, could lead to us doing it other places throughout the county," Luft said.

Johnson said she hopes all 281 students at the school participate.

"It's nice living in a safe community, but even in safe communities you have cases like JonBenet Ramsey," she said. "There's that outside chance this could happen in every community. Why not do everything we can to eliminate that chance?"

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