

THE EYES HAVE IT!

How one man's vision made a difference.

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As the PI Magazines Editor for Law Enforcement issues I continually look for new trends, interesting cases, and emerging technologies. It is the latter that I thought I would be writing about when I began to explore the up-and-coming field of Biometric Technology. What I soon discovered was how one man's idea, supported by a private foundation could combine with a technology company and a national missing persons group to create a new National Database that will contain the voluntary biometric identifiers of our nations children.

The Man? Sheriff Robert J. Garvey, Hampshire County, Massachusetts.

The Foundation? The Molly Bish Foundation.

The Company? The Point Group/Iridian Technology

The Missing persons group? The Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO)

The New National Database? "The Child Project"

The Biometric Technology? Iris Scans

SHERIFF ROBERT J. GARVEY

When I originally contacted "The Point Group," (www.pointgroup.org) to inquire about this biometric technology the first thing that I learned from Kevin O'Reilly, the companies Communications Director was that the entire idea of creating a national database to assist in identifying missing children was brought to them by Sheriff Garvey!

There are quite a few things that are different about Robert Garvey, the Hampton County Sheriff since 1984. First of all, he did not come to be sheriff by rising through the ranks of the correctional department, nor did he come to the position with a law enforcement background. No indeed, Robert Garvey had spent the previous 25 years as a schoolteacher. Also, he was no stranger to local government, having spent some years as a County Commissioner.

It was from this perspective that Garvey accepted then Governor Michael Dukakis' appointment to finish out the term of the former sheriff who died while in office. More with the mentality of an educator than a jailer, Sheriff Garvey has instituted many innovative programs at the Hampshire County Jail, mostly aimed at educating and rehabilitating the inmate population.

Speaking about Garvey's belief that his Jail should be an integral part of the community at large, Dr. Jerome R. Levine, PH.D., wrote in the May/June Issue of "American Jails" that, "Sheriff Garvey actively seeks out opportunities in Northampton and surrounding communities for the inmates to make service contributions."¹ These programs were

¹ American Jail; Jerome R. Levine, May/June 2005, pg.20

obviously one reason that Garvey was voted the National Sheriff's Association's "Man of the Year" in 2002.

Training and rehabilitation programs were not the only innovations at this little correctional facility in North Hampton, MA. a town best known for its artsy community and for being the home of Smith College. Garvey's was one of the first jails in the nation to embrace biometric Iris Scan technology as a means of monitoring visitors and inmates as they enter and leave the facility on their way to courts, hospitals, etc., and insuring that the wrong inmate was never released. According to Sheriff Garvey, "What I learned about Iris Scan technology convinced me that it could be the quickest, most reliable method of positive identification and it has proved to be just that."

When I spoke with Sheriff Garvey about the Child Project he said, "My experience with Iris Scanning, combined with my involvement with the Bish Family and the Molly Bish Foundation led me to believe that a National Database of Iris Scans could be developed to aid in the identification of missing children. I approached the company that provided me with the technology at the jail and asked them if they could do it. It turns out that they could. In 2004, with the backing of the Molly Bish Foundation, I brought this idea to the National Sheriff's Association requesting their endorsement for a new national database to replace the hodge-podge of different methods. Since then over 1000 out of the 3100 Sheriff's departments in the country have expressed interest and have or are in the process of applying for grants."

What I learned from my interview of Sheriff Garvey is that one man can make a difference!

MOLLY BISH FOUNDATION

On June 27, 2000, 16-year-old Molly Bish left home for her summer job as a lifeguard near her home in Warren, MA. Her abduction that day led to a three-year search leading to the eventual discovery of her body. The case garnered extensive media coverage, and the outpouring of support led to the creation of the Molly Bish Foundation by her parents John and Magi Bish. (www.mollybish.org).

"The goal of the foundation is to establish and provide safety awareness programs within our schools and community. It will promote family safety with child ID programs that would include fingerprinting, photographs and the child's physical characteristics. The foundation would also assist in child abduction investigations by providing posters, flyers, buttons, Internet information and links."²

² Molly Bish Foundation; http://www.mollybish.org/new_page_8.htm

IRIS SCANNING:

What is Iris Scanning, and how can Law Enforcement use it? That was my original quest, and the answer seems to have mixed results. One thing is for certain; it will never replace fingerprints in criminal investigations since it is not possible to leave a “latent” Iris Scan at a crime scene.

What it apparently can do is provide an easily manageable repository of positive identification criteria that meets or exceeds the criteria required by the US Government for positive identification as indicated in Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 12, issued by President Bush on August 27, 2004, which requires:

- “* Based on sound criteria for verifying an individual's identity;
- * Strongly resistant to identity fraud, tampering, counterfeiting, and terrorist exploitation;
- * Rapidly authenticated electronically; and
- * Issued only by providers whose reliability has been established by an official accreditation process.”³

According to Iridian Technology, the company that holds the patent for technology that is manufactured and sold by the Point Group, the company that has developed The Child Project:

“The iris is the plainly visible, colored ring that surrounds the pupil. It is a muscular structure that controls the amount of light entering the eye, with intricate details that can be measured, such as striations, pits, and furrows. The iris is not to be confused with the retina, which lines the inside of the back of the eye.

No two irises are alike. There is no detailed correlation between the iris patterns of even identical twins, or the right and left eye of an individual. The amount of information that can be measured in a single iris is much greater than fingerprints, and the accuracy is greater than DNA.”⁴

Kevin O’Reilly, the spokesperson for the Point Group a national technology consulting group located in Plymouth, MA, told me that a high definition digital photograph is taken of the individuals iris, and that information is stored in the database and is instantaneously comparable to a subject without error.

In fact, according to the Biometric Product Testing Final Report (19 March 2001, Center for Mathematics and Scientific Computing, National Physics Laboratory, U.K.) Iris recognition was proven to have the highest biometric accuracy, with no false matches in over two million cross-comparisons⁵

³ Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 12, August 27, 2004

⁴<http://www.iridiantech.com/basics.php>

⁵ <http://www.thechildproject.org/iris-recognition-primer.html>

The ability to easily obtain, categorize, store, and make positive comparisons makes Iris Scanning the ideal medium for the creation of this opt-in database.

As a result, the Hampshire County Sheriff's Office became the first in the country to install the Iris Scan equipment, kicking off the Child Project's new National Database.

THE CHILD PROJECT

When my children were born an inked footprint was taken by the hospital staff to avoid accidental child swapping. I still have those footprints today, keeping them not as a means of identification if they ever went missing but more as a memento's. When my kids were ages 5 and 6, I took them to visit the Pike County, PA Jail, which was being run by a friend of mine. In addition to taking their pictures peering out through the bars of the cell I also fingerprinted them and I have kept those "print cards" in a photo album to this very day. But again this was only as a souvenir, and far from the beginning of a national database of positive identifiers. How many people have any means providing positive identifiers to law enforcement should the worst ever happen? Sure, the advances in DNA can now provide positive identification, but processing DNA is very time consuming and expensive making a national database of such information impossible for the moment.

Enter Biometric Iris Scanning, a cost effective, non-intrusive way to compile millions of records.

The Child Project (Children's Identification and Location Database-CHILD) has been developed to address the need for a national database

"The Child Project

New Partnership Will Create Database to Identify Missing Persons

*The Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO), National Center for Missing Adults (a division of NMCO) and The Point Group Companies, Inc. (TPG) have entered into a teaming agreement to create and maintain a new, and first-of-its-kind, national database designed to identify and locate missing adults and children through the use of iris recognition technology."*⁶

The Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO):

Kim Pasqualini founded NMCO in 1994, for the purpose of assisting law enforcement and the families of missing children. According to the NMCO website "*Unlike existing fingerprint I.D. programs, the biometrics project will create a national registry, securely maintained by NMCO, to give parents, law enforcement, and other authorized users of the system, access to data that can positively identify missing persons in seconds*"⁷

⁶ NMCO, <http://www.theyaremissd.org>

⁷ NMCO, <http://www.theyaremissd.org>

For more information about the Nation's Missing Children Organization (NMCO)
Please visit their website at <http://www.theyaremissd.org/ncma/nmco.php>.