

Protecting Our *Children*

“Cold Case” Techniques Identify Missing Children

(NAPSA)—Many cases of missing children—previously thought to have been closed “cold” cases—are now being pursued and resolved using detective work and the latest investigative technologies.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s (NCMEC) Cold Case Unit increasingly takes advantage of cutting-edge technology to offer answers to families of long-term missing children.

Described as a unit that “never forgets,” it’s a real-life version of the units profiled in TV shows “Cold Case” and “NCIS.” The director of the NCMEC Cold Case Unit, Gerald Nance, was with the real Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) for 25 years and helped inspire the character Leroy Gibbs on the “NCIS” show.

Since it was established, the unit has handled cases involving children who have been missing since as far back as 1947.

“We get as much information as we can about every case, examining police files if we can gain access, talking to people who knew the missing child,” said Nance. “Since I started working with NCIS more than 30 years ago, the advances in forensic technology have been dramatic. We used to rely on old-fashioned detective work, but now we can analyze DNA, do computerized facial reconstruction and rely on technology that was science fiction not too long ago.”

The unit has helped to recover 12 missing children who were alive and 327 who died, since its establishment in 2001. Nearly 200 cold case investigations are currently in progress.

About 100 of the identifications of deceased children resulted from computerized facial reconstruction



Modern facial-reconstruction techniques helped identify a boy who died in 1852.

tions. The Smithsonian Institution frequently works with the NCMEC to identify deceased children.

The Smithsonian recently contacted NCMEC to help determine the identity of William T. White, whose body was found by construction workers digging a gas line in Washington, D.C. in 2005. The organization created a facial reconstruction of White, who was about 15 when he died 155 years ago.

“We want all parents of missing children to know that as long as their children are missing, we will never forget them, we will continue looking for them and we’ve achieved remarkable success in finding and identifying children who’ve been missing for many years,” said NCMEC president Ernie Allen.

The AMBER Alert program, in which NCMEC participates as a secondary distributor, has also had much success in recovering missing children.

For example, a 17-month-old boy in Winchester, Mass. was kidnapped by his babysitter. An AMBER Alert was issued and tips from the alert led law enforcement to apprehend the suspect and return the child.

You can learn more at www.missingkids.com.