



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

Keep your Children Safe

With the Dodge County Fair quickly approaching I thought I would address an important topic, ensuring your children are safe when out and about at community events and what to do if they go missing. The Dodge County Sheriff's Office takes very seriously every missing child. In fact, in the last few years the sheriff's office has taken on the initiative to form a Child Abduction Response Team (CART) which is made up of law enforcement, fire and other first responders throughout the county. The reason for this team is to be ready to snap into action quickly with an effective action plan aimed at locating and recovering missing children as quickly as possible.

There are a few things that parents need to remember as we work together to keep our children safe. The most important thing you can do as a parent for us as first responders is to give us an adequate description of your child including name, age and physical description of your child. The easiest way for you to do that is by coming to see the sheriff's office staff at the fair to obtain a Child ID card. We have fantastic staff that generally work from 10am-6pm at the sheriff's office booth providing an ID card that parents can carry in their wallets. It can quickly be presented to a first responder if your child does go missing. Rather than spend time gathering information, we can simply refer to the card. It even has a picture on it for our reference. The best part is, we provide them free to parents as a community service.

Next we need to have a last known location and clothing description of what they are wearing that day. A great tool to use is your cell phone. When going to an event, take a quick family photo or just snap a picture of your child while they are walking in the parking lot. Pictures are worth a thousand words and are wonderful tools to use when searching. If your child has a phone, install a friend locator app on it. As phones get better and "smarter", they become great tools for parents to use to ensure your child's safety.

Next, set a pre-determined meeting point if you do get separated. That way everyone will know where they are supposed to go. Being separated is very stressful but having that reunification point will hopefully result in your child being reunited with you quickly.

If your child does go missing, don't wait to report it, but let us know immediately. The quicker we get involved, the quicker we can get other resources to help find your child. When a child goes missing, seconds and minutes count. Abductions can happen at any time, anywhere and very quickly. Law enforcement needs every second possible to have the best chance at a safe recovery of that child.

Finally, if you have a loved one, young or old, who has a mental disability such as dementia or autism and they have a tendency to wander, we want to know. We have a fantastic program called Project Lifesaver International (PLI). It's a fantastic tool that we can use to provide peace of mind for families at a low cost. PLI allows us the ability to track and locate your loved one quickly. Be safe at the fair this year and please help us make it a safe, fun and enjoyable event for everyone.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt