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THUMB CELLULAR AND THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN TEAM UP FOR CHILD SAFETY

AMBER Alert Network Turns To Cell Phone Users To Help Save Abducted Children

PIGEON – Finding an abducted child or potentially saving a child’s life are two of the very important reasons why Thumb Cellular decided to participate in the national Wireless AMBER Alerts™ program.

Statistics show that when a child is abducted, the first three hours are the most critical to recovering the child alive. Recognizing their unique ability to provide timely assistance to law enforcement in these unfortunate situations, the wireless industry and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) have officially partnered to launch Wireless AMBER Alerts™, an initiative that will help galvanize the nation’s nearly 200 million wireless subscribers in the search for an abducted child.

It is now possible for any Thumb Cellular subscriber capable of receiving text messages to opt in to receive these free alerts by registering at www.wirelessamberalerts.org or through www.thumbcellular.com. Subscribers may designate up to five geographic areas for which they would like to receive Wireless AMBER Alerts.

“Americans want to help fight crimes against children, and now that power rests in the palm of their hand,” said Steve Largent, President and CEO of CTIA-The Wireless Association®, and President of The Wireless Foundation. “Currently, Alerts are broadcast by television and radio outlets and on some electronic highway signs. With more than 60 percent of Americans owning wireless devices, and seldom going anywhere without them, this initiative will significantly increase the reach of the AMBER Alert program by notifying people – wherever they are – of the emergency situation.”

“We feel very strongly about the importance of this program and our need to be involved with it,” said Paul Picklo, general manager of Thumb Cellular. “Any opportunity that may be out there in which we could assist in finding a missing child or helping law enforcement in any way is one in which we need to participate.”

Picklo went on to say, “We truly hope that this service never has to be utilized in our area, but if the situation arises, we want all of our customers to be able to receive the updates that they desire.”

AMBER stands for “America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response” and was created in 1997 when Dallas-Fort Worth broadcasters teamed with local police to develop an early warning system to find abducted children. The AMBER Alert Program was soon adopted across the nation and is a legacy to Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old girl who was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas, and then murdered. All 50 states have since established AMBER Alert programs.

“To date, more than 200 children have been successfully recovered as a direct result of AMBER Alerts,” said Ernie Allen, NCMEC President and CEO. “My colleagues and I experience great satisfaction when we see abducted children reunited with their families and thank the wireless industry for providing Wireless AMBER Alerts so even more Americans can join us in this important work.”

“Firsthand experience has shown us that tips from the public play a vital role in helping law enforcement locate and ultimately arrest child abductors,” John Walsh, host of “America's Most Wanted” and co-founder of NCMEC said. “I applaud the wireless industry for creating an initiative that will involve millions of Americans helping law enforcement reunite abducted children with their families and potentially leading to the arrest of abductors.”

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CTIA is an international association for the wireless telecommunications industry, representing carriers, manufacturers and wireless Internet providers.

www.ctia.org

The Wireless Foundation is a non-profit organization that was formed by member companies of CTIA-The Wireless Association™ in 1991. The Foundation oversees a number of programs designed to put wireless technology to work addressing the challenges of society.

www.wirelessfoundation.org

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCMEC's congressionally mandated CyberTipline, a reporting mechanism for child sexual exploitation, has handled more than 313,000 leads. Since its establishment in 1984, NCMEC has assisted law enforcement with more than 106,000 missing child cases, resulting in the recovery of more than 92,000 children. For more information about NCMEC, call its toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST or visit

www.missingkids.com