

Ontario Masons launch child ID program

The Algoma District Masonic Association together with Masons in Ontario, last month officially launched their new child identification program with the induction of the first city child into the system.

Taya Niewiero, 4 years old, was introduced to the program by her grandfather Ed Stadnick, a Mason, who manned the ID machine while numerous volunteers and members of the press watched the simple process which resulted in Taya's mother being handed a CD containing all the information necessary to undertake the search should she go missing.

Chairman Patrick Curran opened the session, and with Committee Member Gary Christian welcomed visitors and presented numerous Certificates of Appreciation to Crime Stoppers, The International Dance Academy, Verticals and Visions, Park Electric Service, Sacchetti Construction, Intercity Shopping Centre and The Chronicle-Journal, among others, for their assistance in promoting the program, and helping to raise the \$9,000 required to purchase three ID machines.

MasoniChip has acquired the three machines they deemed necessary to launch the program throughout the city and district, and the first public sessions have already been held at Intercity Shopping Centre.

The equipment for the program was developed by EZ Child ID who worked directly with the National MasonicCHIP foundation in developing the software to produce Child ID kits. Each kit contains a printout of the pertinent information, several still digital photos and digitally scanned fingerprints, as well as a DNA swab and a wax tooth print.

All of this technology aids in the reporting time if a child goes missing. The parent can take the CD to the police to be downloaded, or even e-mail the form, so quick recovery action can get underway. Statistics state that the first two hours after a child has gone missing are the most critical.

MasoniCHIP Ontario is using the most comprehensive digital fingerprinting system available. They have worked with law enforcement to ensure the system is up to their standards, and in fact, have taken it one step further: they've included a digital fingerprint analysis software package to make sure that all necessary "points" on a fingerprint are obtained. This ensures that all the vital information required by the Amber Alert system is captured.

The software even records a digital video with voice.

The parent not only receives a printed EZ Child ID form, they also receive a CD with the information on it. The parent may reprint the form at home if they so desire.



Pat Curran, District Co-ordinator of the MasoniChip program

No information about the child is saved in the computer; the parent is the only person who retains the child's information.

No other system is as comprehensive as the EZ Child ID system, which comes completely assembled and can be set up in under 30 seconds. The software was designed so that with only 5 minutes of training, anyone can use it, and a quality data check list verifies each step has been completed correctly.

Statistics released by Canada's "Our Missing Children" site, and Ontario Child Find indicate that over 60,000 children are reported missing every year; Ontario has the highest proportion per capita at almost 20,000.

The Algoma District Masonic Association will be responsible for the maintenance of equipment and for the scheduling and supporting of Child ID clinics, to be held in shopping centres, the CLE, the Shrine Circus, local and rural fairs and children's festivals.

Anyone volunteering to assist with the EZ Child ID program requires a complete Criminal Records Check. The Grand Lodge A.F.& A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario sponsors this program, while the local Masonic Lodges provide volunteer and fund this free service to families in our community.

In order that the public can feel confident that the volun-

teers are suitable to work with their children, all persons involved with this program must have this check completed.

Although the Criminal Records Check is accompanied by a fee, the Ontario Provincial Police has agreed with MasonicCHIP to waive any fee for this comprehensive service to the community. Dave MacKenzie, M.P.- Oxford and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety said recently: "I have had the opportunity to both read about and observe the MasoniCHIP identification system and I can highly recommend this program to our communities.

"It will provide peace of mind and security to parents and offer a useful and

comprehensive tool for law enforcement agencies," he added.

Appropriate 'forms' have been developed by the Algoma District Masonic Association to ensure uniformity throughout the region, with all volunteers being provided with a sample printout produced by the ID machine, the Criminal Records Check form; a MasonicCHIP "Event Application" form; a child identification program information collection sheet; and a permission form for the MasoniCHIP program.

The Child ID program will increase the safety of children in our community. It will provide information to parents that can be quickly accessed by law enforcement agencies, Amber Alert, and search and rescue teams.

The association will hold annual meetings to review audited financial statements, policies and procedures, and statistics gathered from ID clinics for purposes of long range planning. The annual meeting will be open to all businesses that have provided funding for the program.

All donations are eligible for an official tax receipt.

This program is a community based initiative that will be beneficial to everyone, thus improving the quality of life in Thunder Bay.

The official launching of the program on Thursday, January 24th at the Dease Street Masonic Temple, concluded with cake and coffee and a tangible sense of 'a job well done' by all participants.

3 clinics have been held to date and more than 1800 children now have their free I.D. kits!

Another clinic will be held at Victoriaville Mall on March 22, from 10am-4pm.

To help raise the \$10,000 to launch the MasoniChip Ontario program in Northwestern Ontario please send your donation to the following:

Yes, please accept my cheque to contribute to THE MASONIC ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO to provide parents with I.D. portfolios for their children. These kits will be FREE OF CHARGE.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ TOWN: _____ Postal Code: _____

PHONE: _____

\$20.00 \$30.00 \$50.00 \$100.00 Other

**Please make cheque or money order payable to:
MASONICCHIP ONTARIO THUNDER BAY**

**Send To: PATRICK CURRAN, Committee Member,
133 Egan Place, Thunder Bay, ON., P7A 2Y1**