



NCMEC HONORS LAW ENFORCEMENT TEAM THAT RESCUED MISSING TEEN AND HER BABY

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW IT, BUT THE National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) often calls upon the Office of the Attorney General to help find missing or runaway children. The Attorney General's Law Enforcement Division officers work closely with NCMEC and local law enforcement agencies to recover these endangered children and return them to safety.

NCMEC recently highlighted a success story in which the AG's Law Enforcement Division officers played a central role. The story that earned NCMEC's recognition tracks back to April 22, 2014, when NCMEC asked the Attorney General's Office for help finding a 15-year-old girl from Johnson County who relatives believed had disappeared with an older man and had just given birth.

A sergeant with the Attorney General's Fort Worth Fugitive Apprehension Unit immediately began investigating the case, gathering background information and contacting

law enforcement in Texas counties where the missing adolescent girl may have been sighted. Our sergeant led the all-hands-on-deck effort, enlisting help from her colleagues across the state. Officers from our Houston Fugitive Unit office worked with the Trinity County Sheriff's Office and Trinity Police Department to visit locations where the missing girl might be. At the same time, our lead sergeant and other officers with the Fort Worth Fugitive Unit worked with the Limestone County Sheriff's Office and the Texas Dept. of Public Safety (DPS) to visit locations in Limestone County.

Our lead sergeant soon narrowed her possible leads to the Houston area after the missing girl told a relative that she was in a Harris County hospital – frantic and scared of the man who carried a weapon and was always hiding her. Once law enforcement officers got to the hospital, the new mother was gone – but with diligent police work, they found the birth certificate for a baby boy born to a

15-year-old teenager accompanied by an older male companion. For law enforcement officers, the male suspect and loaded weapon quickly escalated the danger level for recovering the missing teen and her newborn.

Another investigative lead soon indicated that the female teen was likely living in a trailer back in Johnson County with her 31-year-old first cousin, Harold Dwayne Nelson. Fugitive Unit officers surrounded the trailer. When they entered the trailer, Nelson's loaded weapon was in plain sight – and in harm's way of the baby. In the end, Nelson surrendered and Keene Police Department officers took him into custody. Fugitive Unit officers discovered the runaway teen hiding under a bed and safely rescued her and her infant from the dangerous living conditions. During a forensic interview, the officers learned that Nelson had controlled and manipulated the innocent teen for more than a year.

On Oct. 14, 2014, Nelson was convicted of sexual assault of a child,

unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon and harboring a runaway – and received a 10-year prison sentence. The teen mother and her baby now reside safely with family members who were approved by Child Protective Services.

The Texas Attorney General's Office was honored when NCMEC singled out this case for special recognition. Though we are very proud of successfully recovering this vulnerable girl and her baby, we know it would not have happened without the help and cooperation we received from NCMEC, DPS and city and county law enforcement officers. The investigation, search and safe rescue of this missing teen and her newborn was completed in only six days – a direct result of our collaborative law enforcement effort. Congratulations to this hardworking team for demonstrating what great leadership looks like as we strive to keep making a positive impact in the lives of Texas families.

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