



News from the Shelby County Sheriff's Office

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Police Agencies Unite to Help Find Endangered Missing Persons

Municipal police agencies in Shelby County are using similar approaches to more quickly find missing persons with special needs.

“When a person with special needs is missing, it’s vital we quickly communicate with other law enforcement agencies and the public. This standardized approach gives us more opportunities to find people who go missing under unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances,” said Shelby County Sheriff Mark H. Luttrell, Jr.

Representatives from the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and municipal police departments in Bartlett, Collierville, Germantown, Memphis and Millington recently met to ensure Deputies and Officers follow specific guidelines when a person with special needs is missing.

Earlier this year, the Shelby County Commission unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by Commissioner Mike Carpenter that urged the State Legislature to adopt a statewide “Silver Alert” program, similar to an “Amber Alert” used to track endangered children.

This past July, Tennessee lawmakers passed a law about missing senior adults but it only required law enforcement agencies to initiate investigations for people 60-years-of-age or older who have special needs. Further, involving the news media was an option, not a requirement.

Shelby County police agencies have stronger missing persons' guidelines in place. The policies require investigations to begin immediately and for the news media to alert the public.

(More)

“I commend the Sheriffs’ Office for coordinating this effort among Shelby County law enforcement agencies. This unified approach will speed up the investigation process and reassure families during this difficult time of waiting,” said Cheryl Ferguson Feeney, who has been an advisor to the Sheriff’s Office Endangered Missing Persons Planning Committee. Both she and Shelby County Commission Mike Carpenter sought help from the Sheriff’s Office to coordinate the collaboration among law enforcement agencies.

On May 5, 2008, Ms. Feeney’s mother, Elizabeth, left her Berclair area home in Memphis for a doctor’s appointment. Although she had a mild form of dementia, she was still able to drive. Memphis Police Officers and volunteers from the Sheriff’s Office Reserve Deputy and Emergency Services Bureaus found Ms. Ferguson’s remains several months later near T.O. Fuller State Park in south Memphis on November 15, 2008.

Here’s the procedure for investigating endangered missing persons:

- Deputies or Officers will take a report in person
- The case will be assigned to an investigator
- Details about the disappearance will be immediately posted on the National Crime Information Center database (NCIC)
- The media will be given the person’s physical description, their photo, clothing the person was last seen wearing and vehicle description (if applicable)

Once an endangered missing person’s bulletin is issued, the Sheriff’s Office and other law enforcement agencies will assist each other during the investigation and also have search and rescue teams available.

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