

## Using digital info to safeguard children

On the job ... with Guard-A-Kid child ID systems owner Shara Hendler

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A passion for protection: Shara Hendler, former Charles County assistant state's attorney, recently took her passion for protecting children as a prosecutor and bought a Guard-A-Kid franchise to focus her energy on helping to protect thousands of children in Southern Maryland.

As a prosecutor in Charles County for six years, Hendler said she became an expert in the field of child abuse, handling dozens of cases involving children.

In February 2006, Hendler prosecuted the high-profile case of David Lee Isaacs of La Plata, who was convicted on 17 counts of physical and sexual child abuse.

In that case, Isaacs received 193 years of active time, the most ever leveled against a criminal in Charles County history, according to Hendler.

"I think my experience as a prosecutor will help in this [business]," Hendler said. "I know how important this tool is to law enforcement."

Identification and more: The tool Hendler mentions is more than a child's ID card. Guard-A-Kid offers parents a child ID system.

Parents who purchase the kit receive two laminated ID cards with their child's right thumbprint, color photo and emergency information.



*Staff Photo by Gary Smith*  
Shara Hendler operates Guard-A-Kid identification program, which provides families with digital records of photo, fingerprint and demographic information that can be given to police in case of an emergency. Hendler records Dylan Cook's fingerprints to a computer with an electronic reader at KinderCare Learning Center in Waldorf.

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Hendler said the most important part of the system is that all of the child's information, including 10 fingerprints, color photo and demographic information, is also stored on a CD-ROM, which is given to the parents.

“The CD-ROM data provides critical information to police that is easily and quickly transmittable to other agencies,” Hendler said. “Important information can be sent out in a second.”

According to the FBI, 2,000 children are reported missing every day in the United States, and Hendler said time is of the essence when a child goes missing.

She said it is critical for police to have information about a child within the first 30 minutes that they are reported missing.

It’s not just stranger abductions or family abductions that parents should be worried about, Hendler said.

“In Charles County, we have kids that get lost in the woods a couple of times a year,” she said. The CD-ROM “is something that parents can hand immediately to responding officers.”

Filling a void: Hendler, who graduated with honors from Catholic University’s Columbus School of Law in 1999, said she bought the franchise because she saw a need for it in Southern Maryland after her time with the state’s attorney’s office.

Her franchise region covers Charles and Prince George’s counties, with room to grow.

Schools and day care centers are a staple of her business, but Hendler said the system could be useful for any nonprofit organization or even nursing homes.

“When the company came to my attention, it just struck me as something so important,” she said.

Hendler would like to return to law some day, but for now she wants to concentrate on expanding her business.

Michael Kantor