



Written by [T. Dan Tolleson](#) on May 17, 2013

If Your Child Is Missing...

When [three young women, missing for a decade or more](#), were found recently in Cleveland, Ohio, Bob and Gay Smither rejoiced along with the relieved parents and all families who have had missing children. As founders of the Texas-based [Laura Recovery Center Foundation](#) for Missing Children, the Smithers had previously contacted the parents of Gina DeJesus (one of the three women recently found in Cleveland, Ohio), and they knew that this miraculous recovery would give hope to parents of missing children everywhere, especially if their children may have been missing for “ten, twenty, or even 30 years.”



When parents are initially faced with such a personal catastrophe, the advice the Smithers give is on the front page of their website:

1. Don't Wait
2. Call 911
3. Create a [Missing Child Flyer](#)
4. See the [LRC Search Manual](#)

Every year, [police receive about 800,000 reports of missing children](#). Approximately 400,000 of these are runaways, and such a large number overwhelms law enforcement. Other children are missing for benign reasons or are taken by family members. The children in the most immediate danger are those taken by strangers — over 30 each day in the United States. For these cases of true, non-family abductions, immediate community action is urgent. According to Bob Smither, “Community action must create a Triangle of Trust among law enforcement, the community, and the missing child’s family. Law enforcement must be sensitized to the urgency of action in cases of the relatively rare non-family abduction. And the community concerned about this family must immediately be organized into a large-scale ground search that includes billboards, candlelight vigils, and other forms of community action.”

The Smithers learned these necessary procedures for community action through the excruciatingly painful experience of losing a child to a society that is now widely afflicted with moral and spiritual sickness. “[Laura Smither](#), a 12 year-old girl, was abducted on April 3, 1997, while jogging close to her home in Friendswood, Texas. Over 6,000 people took part in a massive nationwide search. Her body was found on April 20, 1997. On April 23, she would have been 13 years old.”

Since 1997, the Laura Recovery Center has helped more than 1,500 families across the nation in the search for their missing children. In more than 100 large-scale ground searches for abducted children, the results are that in about one-third of these searches, the child is found, in about one-third, the child’s body is recovered, and in about one-third, the cases are still open.

This reporter asked Bob Smither, “How often does the perpetrator of the abduction participate in the



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community search?” While Smither acknowledged that this is precisely what had happened in one of the Cleveland, Ohio, searches almost 10 years ago, there are no reliable statistics on this possibility, and therefore it is mandatory that the search organizers obtain “[a picture ID of everybody](#) who comes through the door,” and that these IDs must then be passed on to law enforcement.

What to do if the case of your missing child is still open? Refer to the practical advice in “[When Your Child is Missing.](#)” After a “Letter to Parents,” the table of contents includes the following sub-topics:

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