

REMARKS

OF

**MARY LOU LEARY
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

AT THE

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN
17TH ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST**

ON

**WENDESDAY, MAY 23, 2012
WASHINGTON, DC**

Thank you, Ernie [Allen]. I'm very glad to be here – and grateful that I can help honor these extraordinary law enforcement officers and brave young people.

I want to use this opportunity to thank Ernie and his terrific staff – as well as John [Ryan] and the entire NCMEC Board – for the outstanding service they provide to America's families. They are always on the cutting edge, tapping every available tool and exploring every avenue to improve the safety of our children.

My agency's partnership with NCMEC goes back many years – almost three decades, in fact – and I can think of few relationships that have been as productive and successful. The accomplishments are too many to name – the 24-hour hotline, the CyberTipline, the Child Victim Identification Program, AMBER Alert, the work we've done together to train law enforcement and address international abductions, our joint support of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, and of course our unwavering support of children and families that have been victimized.

And what's remarkable about all of these efforts is that they've become vital elements of our nation's child protection system. None have lost even a bit of their relevance. In fact, they continue to become even more integral to child safety every year. Today, I'm very pleased to announce that we're awarding almost \$27 million to support NCMEC's great work. The funds will continue all the great programs I just named – and many more, like the national resource center and information clearinghouse.

So our partnership continues to grow and thrive – and I'm proud to work for an Attorney General who not only values our work, but who has made it central to his agenda. At the National Missing Children's Day ceremony in 2010, he said that – and I'm quoting here – “supporting and advancing this work is, and will continue to be, a top priority of the Department of Justice.”

He's made good on his promise. Two years ago, he issued the National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction. He's directed resources from across the Department of Justice to bolster the work of the 61 Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces. And he's been a strong supporter of our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Under his leadership, we are making a difference. And his commitment is shared by leadership and staff throughout the Department. This afternoon, Melodee Hanes and I will have the pleasure of joining the Deputy Attorney General at our annual National Missing Children's Day Ceremony, where we'll have the honor of recognizing several remarkable individuals for their work on behalf of missing and exploited children.

Our commitment to NCMEC – and to America's missing and exploited children – remains strong. We will continue to fight the good fight with all of you, making sure that our law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and advocates have the resources they need to find endangered children and bring them safely home.

Thank you all for your good work, and once again, congratulations to the honorees.

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