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## Sheriff looking for 300 people to join missing children search team

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Madison County Sheriff Robert Hertz is looking for about 300 people to join a search team.

The team isn't being activated now; the sheriff is putting a plan together so that the team is ready to hit the ground in the event of an emergency.

During a news conference Tuesday, Hertz said he's partnering with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children to form a Child Abduction Response Team, which would be called into action in some cases where people are missing, lost or injured.

Hertz said only one other response team sanctioned by the national center exists in Illinois, in Lake County.

The sheriff said he can't recall any case in Madison County where a child was abducted by a stranger.

"And I hope that it doesn't happen," he said.

Still, headlines across the country suggest it can happen anywhere at any time, he said.

"All this is, is trying to get the players together, trying to get the plan in place," Hertz said.

The sheriff's office will put out information later on the process of applying to be a team member. He said people wanting to volunteer will undergo a background check.

The only requirements are that a person be able to physically assist in a search, and have nothing questionable in his or her background. The sheriff added that the team will not be an armed posse.

"It's not going to be a vigilante force out there doing its own thing," Hertz said. "The goal is to find the child."

Details are being worked out on what type of training and instruction the volunteers will receive.

The sheriff said the team would not be utilized for cases where a relative or non-custodial parent takes a child. Instead, it would be used for the type of case where, say, a bedroom window is open, and there's no explanation for why the child is missing.

Hertz hopes the team will never be needed, but if it is, "we'll have 600 boots on the ground" within minutes.

He said it's like buying a fire truck: "You buy a fire truck hoping to put it in the garage and never use it."  
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