

PUBLIC SAFETY



David Wallace photos/The Gazette

Sara Schmidt of Cedar Rapids helps Emily Ta, 5, a preschool student at Polk Elementary School, mark her fingerprint for a child identification card at the school on Friday in Cedar Rapids. An estimated 200 students received free laminated cards. The event was organized by Help Find a Child, a Cedar Rapids organization founded by the family of Erin Pospisil, a teenager who disappeared four years ago.

Cards delight students, comfort parents

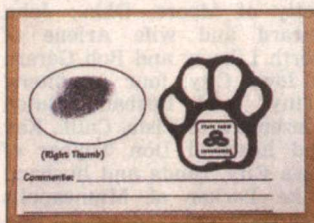
By Diane Heldt
The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Polk Elementary third grader Aleena Hobbs glanced at the still-developing Polaroid photo of herself and decided it was a nice picture.

It's a good thing the 9-year-old liked the photo, because it was taken for an identification card to be given to her family.

"I'll keep it, and it's in case I get lost," Aleena said of the card. "It's a good idea."

Polk students and their siblings were invited to get laminated identification cards Friday at the school during an event sponsored by Help Find a Child, an organization launched by the family of Erin Pospisil



An identification card displaying a student's fingerprint is seen at Polk Elementary School in Cedar Rapids on Friday. The other side shows the child's personal information, including a picture.

after the teen disappeared from Cedar Rapids four years ago June 3. Pospisil would be 19 now and is still missing.

Each identification card includes a child's photo,

height, weight and fingerprint. Organizers expected about 200 kids to get cards Friday. The students also received DNA collection kits. State Farm Insurance helped sponsor the event.

Student volunteers from Metro High School measured the height and weight of the youngsters and helped them with fingerprinting.

It was all pretty exciting for the elementary students.

"Awesome — he gets his own ID!" said first grader Joseph Schossow Jr. after a friend flashed his freshly laminated card.

As for his first experience being fingerprinted?

"It's just ink," said Joseph, looking at the splotch on his right thumb.

Logan Clark, 5, wore a big

grin upon receiving his laminated ID card.

"Is this so we can buy stuff at the store?" he said.

Also at the event was Lisbon parent Bev Vermace, whose son, Tyler, has been missing since running away in January. Now 17, he was last seen in Cedar Rapids.

The identification card event is a way to raise awareness of missing or runaway children and get children and parents talking about the issue, Vermace said.

"It's just something you pray you never have to use, but it would be nice to have it," she said.

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