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Digikids helps parents protect children

By JULIAN AGUILAR , LAREDO MORNING TIMES

A Laredo couple is now providing a state-of-the-art way for parents and guardians to help protect their children. Eduardo and Sara Hinojosa have started a Digikids franchise in Laredo that sells parents an identification CD that stores not only digital pictures, but various other identifying information the Hinojosas said may help locate a lost child.

"A fingerprint is very good for forensics, but when a child is missing you need to have a digital picture," Sara Hinojosa said. "With a digital ID system, you have a CD you can provide to the local police department."

Hinojosa said most parents don't have pictures of their children in their possession, and if they do, they are not updated.

A Digikids purchase includes an ID card small enough to carry in a wallet and the CD ROM kit that enables parents to include information about a child's height, weight, food allergies and other identifying characteristics, such as scars.

"The way the software is set up, it automatically starts up and the program takes you step by step," she said. Hinojosa added that the system is also unique in that information can be updated.

"You can update the information to say 'She fell down two weeks ago and she lost a tooth,'" she said.

With most police cruisers now equipped with laptop computers, she said the information can be downloaded immediately and sent to local law enforcement agencies. They in turn can pass that information in to national databases like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children or the Emergency Alert System.

Hinojosa said the first few hours after a child goes missing is the most crucial and by being able to digitally disseminate information to local, state and federal agencies more quickly, the chance of locating a lost child increases exponentially.

She said the system also ensures parents are the only ones who have access to the information. Once a customer is processed and the software is purchased, Hinojosa said, they are deleted from the Digikids system in order to serve a new customer. The information that is stored is in sole custody of the parents and not registered in a data base that can be broken into and lead to the information falling in the wrong hands.

The cost for one CD kit and one picture ID is \$15. The cost also includes a DNA kit, which gives instructions on how to store a child's DNA, fingerprint and dental records so they too can be readily available in case of an emergency.

The Hinojosas said they were looking for a business venture that could also help them give back to the Laredo community, which has been their home for the last eight years. Protecting the future of the city was an obvious choice.

"We were looking for a way to give back to the community," Hinojosa said. "Although we don't have any children ourselves, we have nieces and nephews. Child safety is extremely important in our eyes."

For more information, people are encouraged to call the Hinojosas at 791-5695.

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