



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

Students at Rainbow Promise Preschool in Imperial gathered kits of identification materials this past week as part of the CHIP (Child Identification Program). Sponsored by the Nebraska Freemasons, CHIP provides parents with identification material in case a child is lost or abducted, to be used by law enforcement agencies.

Members of Purity Lodge 198 of Imperial conducted the program at the United Methodist Church. The cost is about \$4 per child. Kermit Karnes of Imperial donated the money to pay for the 65 Rainbow Promise preschoolers.

A CHIP Kit includes a digital video interview that uses a front, left and right profile and back view. Byron Hust of Imperial, state board member for CHIP, said 90 percent of children found by law enforcement personnel are first sighted from the back, hence the back view.

The interview questions are designed to record a child's voice, speech, favorite items, places and mannerisms. A Webcam still photograph is recorded on a CD for use in the Amber Alert system or by proper authorities if needed.

Only a parent or guardian receives the CD.

The child's fingerprints are recorded using a scanner and printed on the page with a photo and information and also downloaded onto a CD. Information entered into the computer system is deleted after the burning of a CD.

The kit also includes a tooth print using a specially formulated dental wafer in the child's mouth.

Finally, each kit includes a cheek swab for DNA. The DNA sample on the swab will be viable for more than 20 years if kept in a freezer, Hust said.

He stressed that the Masons only keep the parent's permission slip. All other materials are taken home by the parent.

"When they travel they should take the kit with them," Hust added. "It doesn't do any good back home in the freezer."

Several years ago the Masons held a CHIP at Chase County Schools. At that time, however, a video camera was used to record information.

CHIP is used for children ages one through 18, Hust said. However, information on children younger than one may be recorded.

CHIP is co-sponsored by the Nebraska Peace Officers Association, Nebraska Safety Patrol and Nebraska Sheriff's Association, Hust noted.

Over 20,000 children in Nebraska have participated in CHIP, according to Hust.

The equipment used by the local chapter this past week was purchased by Purity Lodge 198. It is then loaned out throughout the state.