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Message from the President

Rhonda McKinney, MPCE/CSM/SAFe

President—Credit Professionals International 2014-2015

It is hard to believe that this will be my last *Connection's* message as your International President! The year has flown by much more rapidly than I imagined it would almost a year ago in Albuquerque during my installation. It has been a privilege and honor to serve at the helm of this great organization and I thank each of you for your trust and support. During the year I have worked hard to demonstrate my theme **THE POWER OF ONE – Making A World of Difference**. Together with my incredible team of officers, directors, committee chairmen and volunteers working with the membership, I believe we did succeed.



Using the results of the Membership Survey as our roadmap to plan for the year, we implemented quarterly conference calls with the board of directors to ensure we were on track;

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“CPI is blessed to have so many members who selflessly and freely give of their talents to ensure that the day-to-day operations run smoothly.”

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held a brainstorming session at the October Strategic Planning Meeting to outline and assign tactical work streams; carefully examined the expenses and eliminated or reduced costs where possible; facilitated a successful fundraiser for CPI; expanded the Student Member Program to include a scholarship; utilized the website and the Facebook page to share real-time education and information; and I even personally recruited a new member and a student member for my local association. While I look at the things that are still on the “to do list” with regret, I am proud of what was accomplished this year and hope that I leave the organization just a little better for having served as your president.

By now everyone has received the email link or been mailed a hard copy of the Pre-Conference Capsule. This year the membership is being asked to vote on numerous bylaws and standing rules changes that directly impact the voting of the elected slate of officers. PLEASE, I strongly encourage everyone to exercise your right and responsibility to VOTE. All ballots must be submitted online, faxed, or by mail no later than June 3, 2015. There will be NO voting at the International Conference. CPI is a member-run organization, so it is imperative that each member submits a ballot to participate and let your voice be heard.

I am looking forward to the International Conference, which is being held June 11-14, 2015, at the Hilton Atlanta/Marietta Hotel and Conference Center in historic Marietta. Did you sign up for the World of Coca-Cola tour and have you checked out the amazing lineup of speakers who will provide the education on Friday, June 12? If not, please go to our website to read their biographies and topics.

Conference Chairman Michele Rocher, MPCE, and the Conference Committee have posted all the information for the conference weekend (including transportation options between the airport and hotel) on the CPI website home page. You can still register for the conference. I hope that every single local association sends at least one representative to the conference because this promises to be a great opportunity for education, networking and fun! I look forward to seeing you all in June.



I would be remiss if I did not recognize just a few of the exceptional individuals upon whom I have relied this year as part of an incredible team of leaders. My Executive Committee: Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE; Linda Simbeck, MPCE/CFE; Eva Nifong, MPCE; and Sue Heusing, MCE; the District Presidents serving on the Board of Directors for the majority of the year: Valrie Butler, MPCE, Charmaine Lucas, and Sharol Rudolph; and The Foundation’s President Charles Gordon, MPCE, Vice President Charlotte Maness, CCCE/MPCE, and the Foundation Directors have all been invaluable to me.

In addition, CPI is blessed to have so many members who selflessly and freely give of their talents to ensure that the day-to-day operations run smoothly. These Volunteer Coordinators are: Gail Ottinger, CCCE/MPCE, Bookkeeper, Parliamentarian and wise sage; Barbara Chapin, CCCE/MPCE, Strategic Planning; Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE, Webmaster; Linda Bridgeford, CCCE/MPCE, and Joyce Jones, CCCE/MPCE, Publications Coordinators; Linda Simbeck, CFE/MPCE, Certification; Jean Jervis, CCCE/MPCE, Conference Coordinator; Esther Brinkley, CA/MPCE, Memorials; Nona Ellzey, MPCE, Financial Review; and all of the committee chairmen and committee members who stepped up all year long to do all that I asked of them.

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MEMBERSHIP

You Can Make a World of Difference

Cindy Westenhofer, MPCE

First Vice President and Membership Chairman

WOW!

We have added 13 new members to the CPI roster this year!

And there is still time to recruit more and qualify for entries into the Membership Drawings to be held at the 2015 International Conference, June 11-13, in Marietta, GA. Don't forget, you will get \$10.00 off your 2015-2016 International dues for every new member you recruited in the 2014-2015 CPI year.

Here's how to qualify for the drawings:

First Drawing

Send CPI the name and email or snail mail address of a potential member. We will add them to our mailing list to receive information from CPI regarding credit education and the value of being a CPI member. ***You will receive one entry in this drawing for each potential member's address you send.***

Second Drawing

Let us know when someone you recruited joins CPI. You will receive one entry for any paid or student member you bring in. ***If you bring in five new members, you will get double (10) entries.***

Third Drawing

Get creative. Produce a CPI promotional video and put it online. Any implemented idea can be entered into the contest. ***You will receive one entry for each implemented idea!*** Send these entries to me. The deadline is June 1, 2015.

This year's membership awards and the winners of the drawings will be announced at the 2015 International Conference Awards Luncheon, June 13. You do not have to be present to win but I hope that you will be attending this important meeting, where you will have opportunities to network and to attend credit education sessions.

2014-2015 NEW MEMBERS

Direct Members

Maria Cesar, Florida
Brenda Clark, Minnesota
Damoya Jones, California

District 3&4

Christopher Manley, Atlanta, GA
C. J. Manley, Atlanta, GA (**student**)
Jackie Edwards, Jackson, TN (**student**)

District 5

Rod Rowe, Goshen, IN
Amy Maier, Ann Arbor, MI
Tim Berry, Ann Arbor, MI
Mike Bruley, Ann Arbor, MI
Pam Sarlito, Ann Arbor, MI

District 7&9

Diane Potter, Hutchinson, KS
Rosalie Aguado, Las Madrugadoras, NM

Government News

Bill Addressing Student Loan Debt Introduced In U.S. House of Representatives

Proposed federal legislation to allow student loan debt to be discharged under bankruptcy has been introduced by U.S. Rep. John K. Delaney (D-Md). Under current law, student loan debt is treated differently than other forms of debt and cannot be discharged.

“While student loan debt is a complex problem that will require many solutions—increased support for grant programs, efforts to increase affordability, improved consumer education—we also need to reform our laws to help those with the absolute greatest need,” Delaney said. “Right now, there is effectively a huge student loan loophole in bankruptcy law that’s hurting real people....It doesn’t make sense for students with heavy debt burdens to be worse than someone with credit card, auto loan debt or mortgage debt.”

Student loan debt is one of the top forms of debt collected. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau estimates that there is \$1.2 trillion in outstanding student loan debt in the U.S. and more than seven million people in default on their loans.

New York Seeks Ban on Social Media Use by Collectors

A bill has been introduced in the New York State Senate that would make it illegal for debt collectors and original creditors to use social media in their collection efforts.

State Senator Keven Parker (D-Brooklyn) said that using social media to communicate with debtors and try to collect debts is an “invasion of personal privacy (that) should not be allowed in New York.”

In the wording of this bill, email is not specifically considered a social network.



FICO Tests New Credit Scoring Model

FICO has launched a pilot program that will use nontraditional data—such as payment histories tied to cable, phone and utility bills—to build credit profiles for the 15 million Americans who are currently unable to obtain traditional credit.

These “unbanked” or “under-banked” consumers usually don’t have credit cards or other loan histories to build a sufficient credit profile.

The 15 million Americans targeted in this FICO pilot program would have to be current on monthly living expenses, such as their regular monthly electric, cable, phone and other utility bills.

Under the pilot program, FICO will use the alternative payment data from LexisNexis Risk Solutions and Equifax. The program allows 12 of the largest credit card issuers in the U.S. to use the payment histories on monthly bills to “identity creditworthy individuals who would otherwise be unlikely to obtain traditional credit,” FICO says.

Card issuers will be able to use the alternative score without having to “rip and replace” existing systems, significantly lowering the cost and accelerating time to market, FICO says.

Making Meetings Work:

9 Tips

By Colleen Kettenhofen

“I have noticed that the people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them.”

E.V. Lucas

One

Have an agenda. Start out with an agenda handed out to the appropriate people at least 72 hours in advance, listing time, date, and place of meeting.

Two

Set ground rules. Let everyone know at the beginning of the meeting that you specifically plan to stick with the allotted time frames and topics in the agenda. This is the key.

Three

Appoint a timekeeper. Make an announcement ahead of time stating exactly how many minutes each person is given to speak or share ideas. Appoint an individual as timekeeper and literally give that person a “timer” that goes off if someone runs overtime. This is beneficial in brainstorming sessions if someone goes off on tangents, or monopolizes the meeting.

Four

Appoint a secretary. Appoint a secretary who will write down the minutes, what was discussed in the meeting, and distribute this to everyone within 48 hours of the meeting ending.

Five

List assignments. In the agenda, state exactly “who” is doing what. For instance, “John Smith, Customer Satisfaction Report, 9:00 a.m.—9:15 a.m.” List it as such in the agenda. Again, announce at the beginning of the meeting that you plan to stick specifically within the given time frames. This will set the tone for the entire meeting.



Six

Coffee and refreshments. If certain individuals are responsible for bringing refreshments to the meeting, list their names in the agenda as well. This will serve as a reminder to them in addition to letting everyone know that food will be served. In my workshops, managers often tell me that “nothing boosts morale or team building better than free food in a meeting.”

Seven

Begin and end on time. Nothing reduces morale like a one hour meeting that ends up lasting two hours. The biggest complaint I hear from my participants about their organization’s meetings is that their meetings “start late, and usually run way over time.” When I’m about to begin training at a company, one thing I often hear is, “In our organization, meetings start late, so don’t be surprised if people aren’t on time.” Employees become conditioned to think it’s acceptable not to be punctual. Also, end the meeting on time. Better yet, end early. People’s attitudes will change if they start attending meetings that are short, productive and get results.

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Eight

Assist each presenter with their audio-visual equipment. To reduce nervousness, arrange to arrive early and help any speakers ahead of time with their equipment. Nothing minimizes nervousness about public speaking like being prepared. One central skill to effective leadership development is to ensure a smooth running meeting. You want to look professional and in control.

Nine

Summarize. As stated earlier, when the meeting adjourns, follow up with a summary and send to all appropriate people within 48 hours. This serves as a reminder of what was discussed, and it's also beneficial if you have "difficult" people who frequently say, "I don't remember that being talked about in the meeting." This way you can refer back to the minutes.

Lastly, lots of managers and team leaders tell me if you really want an effective 15 minute meeting, consider taking the chairs out of the room. Give everyone clip boards to write on, along with paper and pens. Standing for long periods of time is uncomfortable. This helps the meeting stay on track...fast!

"The speed of the leader determines the rate of the pack."

Robert Orben

About the Author

Colleen Kettenhofen is an international workplace and employee management expert, award-winning corporate trainer, and conference keynote speaker. A media veteran, she has appeared on numerous radio shows around the country and has written more than 40 popular articles on diverse workplace issues. Colleen has delivered more than 1,100 entertaining programs in 48 states and five countries. She is the author of 10 published audio programs and two books, including SECRETS YOUR BOSS ISN'T TELLING YOU.

Colleen Kettenhofen is available for keynotes, breakout sessions, and seminars by calling (971) 212-0479.

Website: www.ColleenSpeaks.com

email: colleen@colleenspeaks.com

How To Receive Criticism

Learning to receive criticism properly—and putting it to work for you—can increase your productivity, enhance your reputation and widen your scope of influence on the job and at home.

But first, you have to welcome the change to hear feedback, rather than dread it. When receiving criticism:

- **Stay quiet as you listen to the criticism.** Resist the temptation to interrupt and defend yourself or blame somebody else. You'll come off as overly defensive or selfish. Also, thinking up an excuse may distract you from hearing an important point. Take notes if it improves your concentration.
- **Maintain eye contact and open body language as you listen.** Nothing says "I care about my performance" better than looking someone straight in the eyes and with shoulders squared while you receive the message.
- **Restate the criticism to make sure you understand it.** Doing so ensures that you understand the problem and shows the other person you understand it as well. It also buys you time to think about how to respond.
- **View the criticism as an attempt to fix a problem, not to attack you personally.** But don't accept it blindly, either. Ask yourself whether you've heard similar criticism before. If you have, it's probably valid.

Adapted from *Polite, Professional and Promotable: Etiquette for Today's Workplace*, Columbia Books, LLC, www.workplacetrainingcenter.com

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Credit Scores Don't Tell The Whole Story

Have you recently started seeing your credit score on your bank or credit card statement?

If so, you are not alone. It's becoming the "in thing" for millions of Americans but it may not be a "good thing". Why? There are several reasons, says Bankrate.com.

For one, the credit scores provided to consumers may differ from those provided to lenders, from whom you are seeking to borrow money. A potential lender may not think you are as good a credit risk as you think you are.

Another concern is that knowing you have a great, good or even average credit score can lull you into complacency which, in turn, may cause you to ignore checking your credit reports annually.

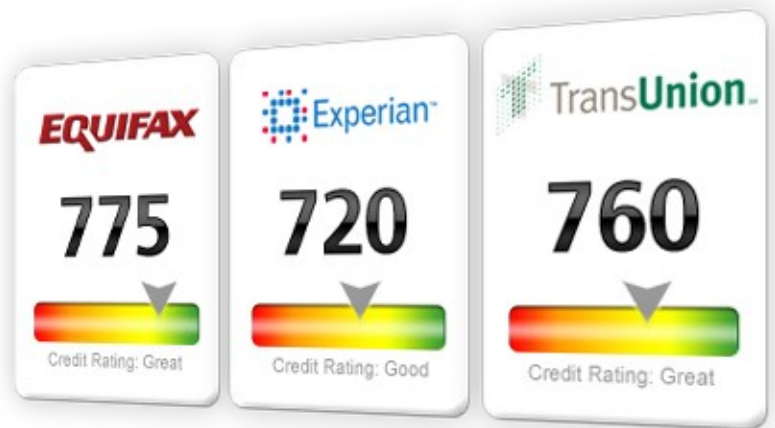
According to a recent Bankrate Money Pulse survey, 35 percent of consumers of all ages have never reviewed their credit report for errors or signs of fraud. By age group, 41 percent of those ages 18 to 29 had never viewed their credit reports. Neither had 44 percent of people age 65 and older.

The decision to forgo pulling a credit report is doubly problematic because "your credit score is not going to tell you if you have been a victim of identity theft," says Mike Sullivan, director of education at nonprofit credit and debt counseling agency Take Charge America. Early warning signs, such as a change to your address or other personal information, have zero impact on your score.

Bruce McClary, vice president of public relations and external affairs with the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, points out that, if you're only looking at the (credit score) number and you're satisfied where the score is, you're missing an opportunity to improve that score simply by correcting mistakes on a report. You'll find evidence of fraud or detrimental

errors only if you go through your credit report line by line, he says.

Federal law mandates that every American has the right to a free copy of their credit report annually from each of the three credit reporting bureaus—Equifax, TransUnion and Experian. The easiest—and perhaps the safest—way to do this is through the government run www.annualcreditreport.com. You can get all three reports at the same time or spread them throughout the year, getting a report from a different bureau every four months.



"If you are a responsible consumer, you are going to check it three times a year," says Mike Sullivan, director of education at nonprofit credit and debt counseling agency Take Charge America.

Experts recommend reviewing your credit report closely for errors. If you discover suspect information, contact the bureau immediately to file a dispute. You also should look for problems that are affecting your credit.

"Instead of chasing the number, you should be putting into practice smart financial choices," says McClary. "Focus primarily (on) how are you treating your lines of credit. Decide to pay your account on time and that alone would make a difference in your overcall credit standing."

Last but certainly not least, the person at the heart of it all day-in and day-out assisting us all, Charlotte Rancilio, our office manager.

The dedication and efforts of each and every one of these individuals allows you and me to enjoy membership in CPI for a fraction of the cost it might otherwise cost us. And we salute them! In addition to the leadership team, I owe a debt of gratitude to CPI of Atlanta for standing by my side, guiding, teaching, pushing and supporting me since I joined CPI in 2003.

By now, each district has held a conference. It was a special treat for me to attend the District 3&4 Conference in Gatlinburg, TN. I want to thank Helen Fisher and the Tennessee association for a delightful conference. The speakers were educational and entertaining, the hotel was very accommodating and the States Breakfast was spectacular! President Valrie Butler, MPCE, her board and the members of the district continue to be a source of pride and inspiration for me and I thank them for making me feel special during the entire conference and all year long.

My focus this year is the impact one person makes in the organization, our communities and in the world. One action, one word, one moment and one person can be a catalyst for change. And I challenged each of us to embrace our own POWER of one this year. I know that I have been truly blessed by having had the incredible opportunity to be touched by so many amazing men and women because of CPI. And for that I give thanks to the Lord and to each of you!

I leave you with the same quote I used to begin this year:

***I am only one, but still I am one.
I cannot do everything, but still I can
do something;
and because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do something
I can do.
Edward Everett Hale***

Living Memorials

In Memory Of:

Missy Baxter
(Daughter of Nona Ellzey, MPCE)

Pearl Turpin

Sherri New
(Daughter of Bonnie Burns)

Given by:

Mary Nebeker, CCCE/MPCE
Gail Ottinger, CCCE/MPCE
Diane Radcliff, PCE

Mary Nebeker, CCCE/MPCE

Gail Ottinger, CCCE/MPCE

New Postage Stamp Provides Another Way to Help Find Missing Children

On May 18, the U. S. Postal Service will issue the new **“Forget-Me-Not”** stamp featuring the phrase “Help Find Missing Children.” It is part of the U. S. Postal Service’s Forever series, which provides First-Class postage in perpetuity. (That means it’s always good to use, even if the first class postage rates go up.)

Designed by Ethel Kessler, this striking stamp features a photograph by Harald Biebel showing a small bouquet of forget-me-nots with a lone flower off to the side to represent the child who has been separated from their loved ones and needs our help.

The release date comes just seven days before the May 25 celebration of National Missing Children’s Day, which is sponsored by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

The debut date of the stamp is also especially significant for CPI members, since it marks the 26th anniversary of the Walk-A-Thon fundraisers sponsored by CPI and The Credit Education Resources Foundation to benefit NCMEC’s work.

The new stamps will not raise funds for NCMEC but they will help NCMEC get the word out about the organization’s commitment to reuniting missing children with their families.

“Our Walk-A-Thons are a great way to raise money to support the work of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children,” said Charles Gordon, president of the Credit



Education Resources Foundation. “These stamps will give CPI members an easy way to keep the Center’s work in the minds of people throughout the year. I urge all CPI members to buy and use them.”

If you are unable to find the new **“Forget Me Not”** stamp at your local post office, you can order a supply online. Sheets of 20 are \$9.80.

If you do not have internet access, you may be able to place your order through a fellow CPI member who does. If that isn’t feasible, send your order, with a check made out to Credit Professionals International, to the CPI Corporate Office, and we will be happy to process it for you.

Student Member Corner

Sallie Mae Helps High School Seniors Evaluate Financial Aid Award Letters

The calendar says it's spring but, for millions of college-bound high school seniors, it's award letter season. That's when colleges across the country follow up acceptance letters with financial aid award letters to offer students financial assistance.

Many families consider the award letter to be the key determinant of a college's affordability, because it reveals what the college might be able to contribute toward the cost and how much of the cost students and families will be expected to cover. According to Sallie Mae's *How America Pays for College 2014* study, during the college selection process, almost half of families eliminated a school from consideration after receiving its financial aid award letter.

To help students and families reach such a critical decision, Sallie Mae has added new free online resources that simplify the process of interpreting and analyzing award letters.

"This is the moment families have been waiting for—they've received their college acceptance letters, they know how much aid each school is offering, and now the ball is in their court to make their college decision," said Martha Holler, senior vice president, Sallie Mae. "Just like students, no two award letters are exactly alike. Our new tips and tools make it easy for students and parents to evaluate award letters and ultimately determine which school best meets their needs."



When evaluating award letters, Sallie Mae suggests keeping these points in mind:

- **Not all award letters are the same.** There is no prescribed formula or format for award letters, although they generally contain the same types of information: how much one year at that college will cost, the amounts and types of scholarships and grants that may be available, and how much the student may be eligible for in federal student loans.
- **Tuition is not the only cost.** Award letters generally include a Cost of Attendance (COA), which is the school's best estimate of one year of tuition, fees, room and board, books, and other expenses, including travel. The COA is not all-inclusive, however. For example, it does not include transportation, living expenses or other personal and out-of-pocket expenses a student may incur.
- **Some money is "free" money, but some needs to be repaid.** Scholarships and grants are examples of "free money" that does not have to be repaid. Money received through

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work-study programs generally doesn't have to be repaid, but recipients are required to work while they are in school. Loans, however, including those from the federal government, will have to be repaid.

- **Mind the gap.** To more easily compare what each school is offering, set up a simple spreadsheet. Start with each school's COA and then subtract all the financial aid and federal loans listed in the award letter. The difference, or gap, is the amount students will need to cover with savings, private student loans, or other funding sources. The gap can vary widely from school to school, depending on what's offered in the award letter.
- **It's only for one year.** Although some items may be renewable, students and families need to fill out the FAFSA and apply for financial aid every year in school, and will receive a new award letter each time.

In addition, new and free resources for analyzing award letters are available on SallieMae.com/awardletters. Students and families will find simple and straightforward information regarding common award letter terminology, details on how award letters are determined, and tools to help calculate college costs.

When it comes to paying for college, Sallie Mae recommends students and families follow its 1-2-3 approach: first, maximize money that does not need to be repaid, such as scholarships and grants; second, explore federal student loans; and, third, consider a responsible private education loan.

More information and free tools and tips about saving, planning, and paying for college are available at www.SallieMae.com.

CREDIT PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

2015 International Conference

June 10-14, 2015



Marietta, Georgia

Hosted by CPI of Atlanta

International Walk-A-Thon

Marietta, GA

June 12, 2015

We Walk For the Children



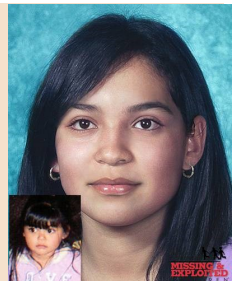
Sponsored by: **Credit Professionals International**
Credit Education Resources Foundation
National Center for Missing and Exploited Children



Carlos Pacheco: Male. **DOB** 4/22/2004. Missing 5/2/2005 from Watsonville, CA. Race: Hispanic. Black hair. Brown eyes. Ht. 3' 3" Wt.: 35 lbs. Photo shown is aged to 10 years.

Hazel Bracamontes: Female. **DOB** 6/17/2011. Missing 5/2/2005 from Watsonville, CA. Race: Hispanic. Black hair. Brown eyes. Ht. 3' Wt.: 30 lbs. Photo shown is aged to 10 years.

They were allegedly abducted by their father, Adrian Pacheco on May 2, 2005. Contact: Watsonville, CA, Police Department 1-831-471-1151.

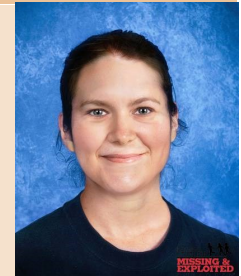


Dailyn Betancourt:

Female. **DOB:** 11/19/1996. Missing: 2/7/2014 from Las Vegas, NV. Race: Hispanic. Brown hair. Brown eyes. Ht. 5'3" Wt. 110 lbs. Dailyn is an endangered runaway. She may be in the company of a juvenile female. Contact: Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (Nevada) 1-702-828-3111.

Amanda Gallion

Female. **DOB:** 9/13/1983. Missing: 10/13/1997 from Gillette, WY. Race: White. Black hair. Blue eyes. Ht. 5'2". Wt: 100 lbs. Amanda's photo is shown age-progressed to 28 years. Amanda has naturally dark blond hair but when she was last seen it was dyed black. Contact Gillette Police Department (Wyoming): 1-307-682-5155. Contact: Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department. 202-265-9100.



Luis Munguia-Zendejas (left) Male. **DOB:** 5/30/2005. Missing: 5/5/2007 from Tulare, CA. Race: Hispanic. Brown hair. Black eyes. Ht. 2'8" Wt: 23 lbs. He has a scar on his right hand. His photo is shown age-progress to 7 years. Luis was allegedly abducted by his mother, Maria. A felony warrant for kidnapping was issued for Maria on 4/13/2010. **Maria Zendejas (right)** Female. **DOB:** 11/8/1981. Missing 5/5/2007 from Tulare, CA. Race: Hispanic. Black hair. Black eyes. They may be in Mexico. Contact Tulare, CA, Police Department. 1-559-733-6218



ANY ONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT:
The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE LOST)

Child Find Canada—1-800-513-3463