

## Amber Alerts

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There were a lot of complaints over the past year from people who weren't too happy about receiving Amber Alerts over their cell phone.

Apparently a few seconds of irritating sound isn't worth saving the life of a missing kid for some people.

An Amber Alert was issued again last week and did, most likely, save the life of a child.

Witnesses observed a boy being forced into a truck by two men while he screamed for help.

Police were called and a report taken. However, at the time they had no idea who the boy was. Since he was supposed to be in school his parents didn't know he was missing.

For reasons thus far unknown, the boy was never reported as missing from class, even though school board protocol dictates parents should have been notified by 11:00 a.m. The parents didn't receive notice that their child was missing until 6:00 p.m.

The school board is taking the error seriously, at least on a public level, and has placed four school staff members on 'home assignment' while they investigate why no one was notified that a boy was missing.

When the police finally figured out who the missing boy was, and verified that his absence met the criteria required for an Amber Alert, his face was posted all over social media and news reports.

This is something the kidnappers probably didn't count on. In the criminal world, thinking ahead is rarely a part of the plan.

Kidnapping a child, even by criminal gangsters standards, is a low move.

We are led to believe by movies, and common lore, that gangsters and such associates don't mess with other's family members as some kind of general code of the streets.

Apparently these guys didn't get the memo or read the gangster's book of acceptable criminal conduct.

It turns out this kidnapping was part of some kind of revenge or intimidation as a result of a drug deal gone bad, the kidnapped boy's step-brother being the target and the innocent boy the pawn.

The step-brother beat it out of town ? he knows who the kidnappers are and that they are looking for him.

In true criminal fashion, he would rather see his brother as a victim than 'rat out' the kidnappers to police.

Fortunately for the victim, the fact that the Amber Alert plastered his face all over the place meant the kidnappers had a big problem on their hands.

There is little doubt what would have happened to this kid if word of the kidnapping and his photo had not been made public. Drug dealers rarely have a sudden change of heart and release a victim unharmed.

In the end, the kidnappers dumped him in a barn in Brampton. Police aren't saying what happened to him while in captivity ? and for good reason. He's a kid and he's been through enough.

The police are still looking for the kidnappers.

All this happened over a drug debt, specifically a cocaine drug debt.

According to some reports, cocaine use is rampant in Canada. Some people are outright addicts while others enjoy a snort during their weekend party.

Cocaine is a drug that really doesn't slot into a particular demographic. It is used by people in all walks of life and all different ages.

In Canada, according to reports, it's cheap, at least in drug terms. It's around \$85 per gram here, compared to \$120 per gram in the rest of the world.

The thing with recreational illegal drug users is they claim it's a victimless crime. They pay for it and no one forces them to do it ? so what's the harm?

Well, the harm is that a 14 year-old boy was kidnapped.

It doesn't matter if you're a dentist, a real estate agent, a plumber, student, a doctor, lawyer, or a guy that stands on the street corner wearing a costume and holding a giant arrow pointing to the shop with a \$5.99 special on take-out pizzas, if you're buying illegal drugs you are part of the circle that resulted in this crime.

It's a case of supply and demand. Drugs users want it, drug dealers supply it.

The illegal drug trade is a ruthless industry that relies on the vulnerable and the weak, and it is a highly lucrative trade ? it is also deadly to lot of people.

In this case, it could have been a 14-year-old kid who paid the ultimate price because his step-brother chose a criminal lifestyle.