

Knox County sheriff honored



Barber

MOUNT VERNON -- Knox County Sheriff David Barber earned a national award for his efforts in the most difficult week of his career.

Barber was honored recently in Washington, D.C., during National Missing Children's Day. He received the 2011 Missing Children's Law Enforcement Award.

"This is probably the most humbling, almost overwhelming, recognition to happen in my career," Barber said.

The state attorney general's office nominated Barber for his leadership and decision-making in the aftermath of a triple homicide and abduction in Apple Valley.

Matthew Hoffman killed and dismembered Tina Herrmann, 32; her son, Kody Maynard, 11; and a family friend, Stephanie Sprang, 41. He left their remains in a hollow tree at the Kokosing Nature Preserve near Fredericktown.

A SWAT team found Sarah Maynard, 13, bound and gagged in Hoffman's basement Nov. 14.

"The whole tragedy changed this county forever," Barber said. "The one thing it brought home is there truly is evil everywhere."

Hoffman pleaded guilty to 10 counts, including aggravated murder, gross abuse of a corpse, burglary, kidnapping and rape. He was sentenced to three life terms in prison with no possibility of parole.

"There is no doubt in my mind that she (Sarah) was going to be killed," Barber said. "He couldn't keep her forever, and he wasn't going to let her go."

Barber had to keep his wits about him as national media descended on his rural county.

"At times, it was very overwhelming. They just camped out," he said. "There was so much pressure to be on their shows right in the midst of the investigation. That was not going to happen."

Barber even turned down Oprah Winfrey in his focus to find Sarah, who now is staying with her father and stepmother in the Columbus area. Barber has kept in touch with her.

"She's a very resilient little girl," he said. "I kind of refer to her as my hero."

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