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## AMBER ALERTS IN 50 STATES: PRESS RELEASE 02-18-05

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### POLLY KLAAS FOUNDATION COMPLETES AMBER ALERT NOW CAMPAIGN AS HAWAII IMPLEMENTS THE NATION'S 50TH STATEWIDE PLAN

#### ***Statement by Jenni Thompson, Director of Public Affairs, the Polly Klaas Foundation.***

Petaluma, CA., February 18, 2005: "America's children are far safer today than they were in July of 2002. They are safer because all 50 states now have statewide Amber Alert plans, the life-saving electronic alerts that spread the word of a child's abduction more quickly than traditional means.

"The Polly Klaas Foundation sincerely thanks Hawaii's governor, state officials and the numerous agencies who worked hard to make the state the 50th to implement a statewide Amber Alert system. As a state 2,500 miles from the U.S. and made up of numerous islands, Hawaii had to overcome unique challenges in developing a coordinated Amber plan. We applaud their accomplishment and important step for improving the recovery efforts for missing kids.

"Amber Alerts work. Since their inception, Amber Alerts have harnessed the power of community involvement and successfully recovered 192 children nationwide, including two teenage girls from Lancaster County, California on August 1, 2002. Tamara Brooks and Jacqueline Marris were rescued from their abductor after California issued its first-ever Amber Alert. The amazing recovery came after weeks of the Polly Klaas Foundation and others working with Governor Davis to implement a statewide plan.

"Our success in California and the tidal wave of public support for Amber Alerts elsewhere implored the Polly Klaas Foundation to launch its Amber Alerts Now campaign on August 8, 2002. At the time, there were 14 statewide plans (including California) that had safely recovered 19 children. After more than two years of lobbying and consultation with states without Amber Alerts, we are gratified that 50 statewide plans have now saved an additional 173 children.

"We also were gratified to work with Congress and other child advocates on the National Amber Alert System, signed into law by President Bush on April 30, 2003. The national program helps coordinate state plans, train state officials and showcase new technologies.

"But our work is not over. Congress must continue to fully fund the national Amber Alert program, and states must maximize the effectiveness of their own alerts. This includes standardizing the age criteria for a kidnapped child at 17 or under and expediting the issuing of alerts as soon as a child meets all the necessary requirements.

"At the Polly Klaas Foundation, we will do everything in our power to make Amber Alerts as effective as possible, and we recognize and thank everyone else who continues to do the same."

\*Marc Klaas is not affiliated with the Polly Klaas Foundation\*