



The Dallas Morning News John P. Rhoads

Jackie Gatewood holds daughters Anna, 2 (right), and Emily, 4, as she talks with friends at the Arlington office of the American Association for Lost Children on Friday.

Kid-searcher reunites families

Ex-stockbroker has helped locate 28 kidnapped children

By Al Brumley
Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

ARLINGTON — For two years, the question Mark Miller has had the most trouble answering is this one: "Why?"

Why did he give up a career as a stockbroker and entrepreneur to go looking for kidnapped children? Why does much of his livelihood now depend on M&M's candies?

The answer, he says, is simple — too simple for many people to believe: "I wanted to help people."

In little more than two years, the founder of the Houston-based American Association for Lost Children has helped locate 28 kidnapped youngsters.

His latest success story came Thursday when he found two Arlington children, Emily Gatewood, 4, and her

sister, 2-year-old Anna. The girls were taken from their mother, Jackie Gatewood, by her ex-husband 18 months ago. After searching for five months, Mr. Miller and an assistant found the girls living with their father in a Texarkana mobile home.

The girls' father was being held Friday in a Bowie County jail, but officials there would not disclose the charges against him.

For Mr. Miller, Thursday's success is another affirmation that the decision he made two years ago was not a mistake.

"I had gotten something in the mail — one of those 'Have you seen me?' leaflets," Mr. Miller said. "And I called them and asked them if they looked for the children, and they said, 'No.' So I decided that somebody needed to

start looking for these kids."

At first, he tried hiring private investigators to do the legwork, "but I kept getting ripped off," he said. So Mr. Miller began working with a Houston private investigator and eventually received his investigator's license.

He founded the association with \$10,000 of his own money in July 1987. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding kidnapped children at no cost to the parents. His only criterion is that the alleged abductor must have a felony warrant out for his or her arrest.

"A felony warrant usually indicates some type of abuse is involved," he said.

When he founded the association, please see MAN HAS on Page 38A.

Man has helped find 28 kidnapped children

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Mr. Miller gave up a comfortable, middle-class career selling mobile homes and investing in small businesses.

Now, he said, "my car's been repossessed and I've lost just about everything."

The association survives on donations and on revenues generated from candy sales, he said.

Although Mr. Miller does not charge for his services, he often asks parents to help arrange fund-raising activities.

Mr. Miller has one assistant, Mike Kramer, who helps with the investigations and with the candy sales.

"We like to stand in front of Wal-Mart stores and sell candy there," Mr. Kramer said. Last year the association sold 30,000 boxes of candy.

Mr. Miller lives and works out of a small house in Houston. He normally works on about 10 cases at a time, but said he has a backlog of about 20.

Of the cases he has investigated, only one remains unsolved, he said.

Ms. Gatewood, a 29-year-old junior high school English teacher in Arlington, learned about the association from a newspaper article. She called Mr. Miller in September and said she has spent countless hours checking out leads with him.

"They're the only ones I could find that would get in the car with me and actually go look" for the children, Ms. Gatewood said Friday, shortly after returning to Arlington from Texarkana.

Mr. Miller said a tip led him to Texarkana.

He said Ms. Gatewood's ex-husband had used several aliases and taken the girls to at least four dif-

ferent cities in the past 18 months.

When he found the man's mobile home, he notified Texarkana police, who arrested the man at home.

Police found the girls inside, "living in a pigsty," Mr. Miller said.

Ms. Gatewood said the girls were sitting in front of a television, dressed only in training pants, eating bacon off a paper towel on the floor. The older girl recognized her,

but her younger daughter was reluctant to accompany her at first, she said.

She said the girls had marks on their legs and backs, some of which resembled cigarette burns. Medical tests will be conducted to determine whether they were abused, she said.

Ms. Gatewood's plans for the weekend include "a lot of hugging

and just spending time with" her two daughters, she said.

"I knew God would deliver them home eventually," she said.

Mr. Miller said anyone needing help locating a kidnapped child or wishing to make a donation may contact him by calling 1-800-873-5678 or writing American Association for Lost Children, P.O. Box 41134, Houston, Texas 77241-1134.

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