

**WHEREAS,** this day is dedicated to raising awareness of those affected by family abduction. These abductions have a devastating impact, causing deep emotional and psychological trauma not only to the abducted child but also to the left-behind parent and extended family. Such events often disrupt family stability and trust, with far-reaching effects on the broader community. While nonfamily abductions account for only 1% of missing child reports to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), family abductions make up a significantly larger share of these cases; and

**WHEREAS,** May serves as a pivotal time to combat family abductions, reunite missing children with their families, and recognize those dedicated to protecting society's most vulnerable. This month offers an opportunity to raise awareness, support affected families, and strengthen community efforts to prevent future abductions; and

**WHEREAS,** a family abduction occurs when a child is taken, wrongfully retained, or concealed by a parent or other family member, denying another individual their right to custody or visitation, even in cases with unclear or absent court orders. Such abductions are often driven by the perpetrator's frustration with the left-behind parent, the legal system, or personal circumstances; and

**WHEREAS,** the City of Fort Pierce is committed to remaining vigilant and informed about the dangers facing children in our community, recognizing that family abduction is a serious crime in all states, not merely a civil matter. Law enforcement officers should treat these incidents as severe forms of child abuse, rather than minor offenses; and

**WHEREAS,** it is incumbent upon law enforcement agencies to have written plans outlining actions and procedures for promptly addressing family abduction cases. Courts have determined that law enforcement must ensure children are with their lawful custodians and verify the validity of any court orders, as failure to establish necessary training and policies poses a threat to public safety.

**NOW, THEREFORE,** I, Linda Hudson, Mayor of the City of Fort Pierce, Florida, do hereby proclaim May 25, 2025 as:

***Family Abduction Awareness Day***

in the City of Fort Pierce, encourage our citizens to become educated about the prevalence, risks, and consequences of family abduction, and to provide guidance on warning signs, preventive measures, and available resources to effectively address this critical issue.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF,** I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Official Seal of the City of Fort Pierce, Florida, to be affixed this 5<sup>th</sup> day of May 2025.

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**MAYOR/COMMISSIONER**