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STATEMENT OF AUDREY BADGER
July, 1998

As the days and months pass by, it is difficult as a mother to continue to watch the terror and fear that my 25 year old daughter with Down's Syndrome, Nikki, is still experiencing as a result of her being raped.

It saddens our family to see that the only time she will leave our home is when she is accompanied by one of our family members, and that much of her former leisure time was spent outside on her bicycle interacting with neighbors and friends.

Now, when she is not working at her part time job, or traveling with her parents, she spends hours alone watching videotapes or playing music in her room. However, there is joy in her heart when the doorbell rings and standing at the door is Officer Adgie, the policeman who was assigned to our case, and who stops by simply to say "hello".

This man has been a God send to our family. He is very aware of the importance of letting our daughter know that he is visible and always nearby to check on her safety. He gave her an officer's badge and a picture of himself in uniform to keep in her wallet. Wherever she goes, these are always with her. This helps to alleviate much of her fears. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having a sensitive, knowledgeable and capable police officer such as this working on behalf of ones family and at a time when support and understanding is most needed. This officer attributes much of his awareness and capabilities in this area as a direct result of caring for his own daughter who is visually impaired.

I also feel that law officers, as well as judges and attorneys, can gain the same knowledge and sensitivity towards individuals with disabilities through proper training and exposure. I can recall the officers who came to our home when we first called the police about the incident. Neither officer had any experience in dealing with person with special needs in their line of work. They asked our daughter what they thought were legitimate questions - such as: "Was the boy white like us?" Her response: "No". "Was he brown like your mom and dad?" Her response: "No". The officers turned to us and said, "I really don't think she knows or understands" - (a poor assumption on their part). I turned to our daughter and said, "Nikki, tell us what the boy looked like." Her response: "He looks like Mr. Lee's family".

Mr. Lee is Asian and the boy who molested her was also Asian. Therefore, not white like the officers, not brown like her family, but instead of a different hue

and culture. The manner in which a question is asked, will determine the type of response received from a person with special needs. Officer Adgie also knew the proper questioning technique to use. During the competency hearing he had to apprise an inexperienced D.A. who had never dealt with people with special needs, as to the type of questions that would get the best results. Until then, the D.A. was not doing such a good job. Our daughter had no idea what he meant when he asked her what holiday came in the fall. In order to give an answer of some sort, she responded: "The leaves are falling." Officer Adgie suggested he ask her questions relating to her experiences, and that were more open ended. He suggested questions relating to her high school prom or her senior school play. She was able to elaborate in detail about each event, and the judge held that she was competent to testify.

Police officers don't often get the accolades they deserve in their difficult line of duty, but being able to add another dimension to the wonderful work that they do through training and becoming an experienced advocate for those individuals who cannot always speak for themselves, can prove to be a most rewarding experience. Officer Adgie says he'll take that any day.