



## **Educator wins first prize for teaching safety**

Amy Gordon  
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VINCENT — Speech therapist Misty Gardner has been named a first prize winner for the Got2BSafe program. In the program, educators come up with unique ways to teach their students about keeping themselves safe.

Gardner, who works at Vincent Elementary School, works with her students on the four safety rules - "check first," "go with a friend," "it's my body" and "tell an adult." To keep her kids interested, she integrates the lesson into her speech therapy.

"We do little conversation groups and within those, we discuss the rules and how we can use them," she said. "I try to give them ideas on how to use the rules and they might role play."

Gardner said the topic came up because of the students' experiences.

"One of the children had had a stranger approach her," she said. "Her grandmother was not far away, and the little girl just ignored the person and ran home."

That student brought up the subject in class and asked about safety. Because of that, the students were really interested in the four rules, Gardner said.

The first prize was \$500 worth of school supplies. First prizes were awarded to 100 educators throughout the country,

Gardner said she will talk with her principal about how to use the money, but she hopes to get a new printer.

Gardner, who has been a speech therapist for a year, said she would continue to incorporate the safety rules into her lessons.

"That's just one of the most important things," she said. "If you're not teaching them safety, why are you teaching them other things?"

According to the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children, 797,500 children go missing each year. On average, 2,185 children are reported missing every day.