



MEDIA RELEASE

Authorized release by: Sergeant Amber Christian

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Thursday, February 15, 2024

Missing Child from Ames Found Safe

On February 14, 2024, Avery Doherty, age 6, of Ames, was located safe on Peaks Island off the coast of Portland, Maine. Esther Bender, the child's mother, unlawfully removed Avery from the State of Iowa on or about October 14, 2023, and was in violation of a court order. Esther Bender, age 41, of Ames, Iowa, was arrested on Peaks Island and charged with the following:

- Violation of Custodial Order, a serious misdemeanor, Iowa Code section 710.6

We want to thank the Story County Sheriff's Office, Maine State Police, Portland (ME) Police Department and the FBI for their assistance in this continued investigation.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Ames Police Department at (515) 239-5133 or the anonymous tip line **(515) 239-5533**. You may also contact Crime Stoppers of Central Iowa at (515) 223-1400. Online anonymous tips may be submitted to www.crimestoppersofcentraliowa.com.

Questions regarding this press release may be directed to Sergeant Amber Christian, Ames Police Department, at (515) 239-5134 or (515) 239-5133.

A criminal charge is merely an accusation, and defendant(s) are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

