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BY JONATHAN STORM

Little girl lost

'Frontline' digs into the story of a child found dead in her foster home and gets unusual access to a social-services agency.

Last month, *Frontline* won the highest award there is for TV news reporting. You might have missed it. You might miss *Frontline*, too, most of the time, even as it produces provocative, important and, miraculously, entertaining television week after week and presents it Thursdays on PBS.

The prize is the Alfred I. du Pont-

WGBH/Frontline



Logan Marr, 5, killed by her foster mother.

Columbia University Gold Baton for excellence in broadcast journalism. *Frontline* got it for a series of documentaries on the origins and impacts of terrorism.

It's the kind of thing that gets lost among the daily shouting on the cable news channels — and frequently in news outlets that are supposed to be more reasoned and comprehensive — as everybody rushes breathlessly to report the latest hiccup of weapons inspectors in Iraq or the hot rumor about Osama bin Laden's kidneys.

Thursday at 10 p.m. on WHYY, PBS's *Frontline* turns its attention to child welfare, specifically the government's removal of children from their homes. "What is the proper balance be-

tween saving a child and destroying a family?" narrator Will Lyman asks.

Frontline unravels the facts of the case of Logan Marr, a 5-year-old Maine girl, who lived with four different families in her short life, and was found dead in the basement of the last one. Her foster mother is a former caseworker with the very agency that ordered the child's removal from her birth mother in the first place. As you might expect, the film is emotionally charged and shocking.

The Maine Department of Human Services refused to cooperate in making the documentary. But, to try to polish its tarnished image, it did grant unprecedented access subsequently. Next week, *Frontline* presents the results of that effort, a startling examination of government and human function at the most intimate levels.

Both films make clear that there is no "answer" to the question of balance between maintaining families and protecting children. So *Frontline* joined with the occasional PBS series Fred Friendly Seminars to produce a "national dialogue" following next week's show, in which experts and ordinary people who have experienced the child welfare system discuss the matter.

Rather than simply presenting the issue, which it does elegantly and affectingly, *Frontline* also seeks to advance thinking on it and, potentially, improve the lives of people on both sides.

That would be prize-winning work anywhere, but especially in the usually tawdry world of television. ●

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**THURSDAYS
AT 8 P.M.
ON WHYY**