

KLAAS ACTION REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KLAASKIDS FOUNDATION

A mile a minute....
that is how fast your child can disappear



A MESSAGE FROM MARC

Happy holidays from the staff and volunteers of the Klaas-Kids Foundation. As America navigates the troubled waters of economic uncertainty, we should keep in mind that there are others whose needs far surpass our own. This year, give that someone a gift that will touch their heart and warm their soul: Make a contribution in the recipient's name for child safety.

Like any well-thought-out, heartfelt gift, a gift to KlaasKids is always in style. It is never the wrong size and it comes in everyone's favorite color. It goes perfectly with any décor and assembly is not required. Your donation to the KlaasKids Foundation does not require batteries and no one can ever have too many. Probably the greatest gift is that it even feels better to give than to receive.

The recipient will receive a holiday card bearing your name. It can include a personal message from you, a note of thanks and acknowledgment from the KlaasKids Foundation, a receipt for use as a tax deduction, and a KlaasKids Teddy Bear. In

addition, they will learn about our cause, and they will know how much you care about the safety of all of our children. It is truly the gift that keeps on giving.

Money that is donated to the KlaasKids Foundation supports a variety of programs and initiatives, including our very successful Print-A-Thon program and our English and Spanish language websites. In 2008, our search director Brad Dennis and his team have either facilitated or assisted in the recovery of 35 missing persons, including two children recovered as they were being trafficked. All of these efforts were financed by the Foundation.

On a related matter, it is with great pride and some concern that we bid a temporary farewell to our good friend and colleague, Tim Nowell. An invaluable asset to KlaasKids and BeyondMissing, Inc., Tim has accepted a position as an investigator for the Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. In our prayers we should remember Tim and all of the brave Americans who are serving overseas during this dangerous and troubling time. ■

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Shortly after the truth was revealed about the death of my daughter Polly 15 years ago, I met then-Senator Joe Biden. During the course of our few minutes together, I experienced an act of compassion and kindness that retains a special place in my heart. The meeting did not change my life -- indeed, my life had already been profoundly changed in the months prior to the meeting, but it did provide me with insight, clarity, and a sense of hope that had hitherto escaped my grasp.

In December 1993, I was invited to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Clinton. During the course of my three days in the nation's capitol, and for a variety of reasons, I was afforded extraordinary access to America's political elite. Many of them wanted to strengthen their law and order credentials in preparation for the next year's election, because public safety was a primary issue of the day. I know that a few tried to enlist me to carry water for their pet criminal justice legislation. Perhaps some of them were simply being kind in the face of personal tragedy. However, there is no doubt that I represented the novelty of the moment, because one powerful Congressman declared that people like me represented a "dog and pony show."

Unfortunately, I have been unable to retain many of the details from that profoundly sad time in my life. Like a legally but not totally blind person who sees only outlines, my heavy veil of grief filtered the details leaving impressions of varying degrees of clarity. I do remember being shuttled among offices and meeting a number of Senators and Congresspersons. Always surrounded by staffers, they would sit with me for a few minutes, express

their condolences, talk about their pet projects, and we would pose for the inevitable meet and greet photo.

At one point I was escorted into a beautifully appointed but darkened room. Senator Joe Biden was seated on an easy chair in front of his desk. He was alone: There were no aides or handlers anywhere in sight. The Senator motioned for me to sit on a matching chair across from him, about three feet away. In a quiet voice, he told me to call him Joe. He expressed his condolences as had so many before. Then, quietly and with great compassion, he recounted the story of his own tragedy. He talked about losing his young wife and infant daughter in a catastrophic automobile accident when he was first elected to the Senate. He told me about his personal anguish and his moral crisis. He showed me an object, a gift from his deceased wife that he always keeps on his desk as a reminder of her love -- not her loss. He asked me how I was doing. We talked about strength, family, and faith. When we concluded, Joe hugged me and wished me well.

For a brief moment in time, we were simply two men who had experienced profound loss. But I in truth was the recipient of a gift. More than anything else, Senator Biden served as an example of how to reconstruct a shattered life. If he could recover after having lost so much; if he could live a life of dignity and accomplishments then so could I. I have had many encounters with the Senator since then, but the subject of that particular meeting has never come up.

I share this personal moment because it is important that people understand that Senator Biden stands apart as a politician and as a man. ■

SHOULD WE LEGALIZE PROSTITUTION?

Every few years, individuals and organizations in cities within the U.S. set up a call to legalize prostitution. San Francisco's Measure K was the most recent attempt to legitimize the sex industry. Defenders of the proposition claimed that passage would save the city money, reduce sex trafficking, improve reporting of crimes against prostitutes, and support San Francisco's "sex-friendly" environment.

Voters didn't buy it—Measure K was defeated by a wide margin. But were they right? Wouldn't legalization help to reduce sex trafficking,

especially of underage girls and boys?

In 2008 the citizens of San Francisco defeated a proposal to legalize prostitution by 16-points.

To find out, we did something proponents of the measure did not: We looked at how prostitution has worked in places where it has been legal for some time. In the U.S., this includes the states of Rhode Island and Nevada; several Euro-

pean cities have also experimented with legalization in attempts to defeat trafficking. We also examined how most prostitutes get into the trade.

Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

First, let's get something straight: Being a prostitute is not cool. It is not romantic. It rarely pays well. Hookers are not rough diamonds who get into the trade because they love sex and have a heart of gold. In

actual fact, many start out as missing children who were trafficked by pimps into the trade.

As just one example, in 2006 16-year-old Shauna N. went to spend the night with a girlfriend. Her parents didn't know that the friend was a prostitute, or that the friend's "father" was a convicted felon trolling for new girls. Shauna was found three days later, having been drugged, beaten, raped, infected with an STD, and sold on the Internet for \$300,000.

Such cases are not uncommon. Traffickers deliberately seek out underage girls and boys as they are seen as "fresh meat," not yet addicted to drugs (though more than 90% will be) and less likely to carry HIV or STDs. Also, forcing an American child into prostitution is less risky; strangely, sex workers brought in from other countries have access to far more protections and services than U.S. citizens do.

It doesn't take a kidnapping to accomplish this. According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, more than 1.6 million children run away annually in the U.S., half of whom are girls. Within 48 hours, one-third are recruited into the underground world of prostitution and pornography. The average age for girls is 12 to 14 years of age; boys tend to be 11 to 13 years old. Of these girls, 75% work for a pimp. By legalizing prostitution, we legitimize the sex trafficking, and due to the circumstances of the trade, their primary victims will always be children.

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The Consequences of Legal Prostitution

How is legal prostitution working out in Europe and the two U.S. states where it is allowed? To find out, let's take a look at the nirvana of the sex trade: Amsterdam. Its Red Light district has been held up for years as a model of enlightened acceptance of the "oldest profession." Are its workers in fact safer? Is there less trafficking?

No. City mayor Job Cohen admitted as early as 2005 that with legalization, trafficking there has become *more* frequent, not less. Amsterdam police representatives went further, telling LifeSiteNews.com, "We are in the midst of modern slavery."

While a few prostitutes are in the industry by choice, they are an extreme minority. According to a U.S. study by Prostitution Research and Education, 88% said they wanted out of the trade. Another study by the University of Rhode Island (Rhode Island allows some prostitution) found that hookers are 18 times more likely to be murdered; that 80% sustain moderate to severe injuries from their pimps or johns, 86% suffer from depression, and 63% have attempted suicide.

Proponents often claim that legalization would prompt trafficking investigations by freeing prostitutes and clients to report abuses. However, Police Captain Pardini, head of the San Francisco vice unit, said before the election that, "the likelihood people are going to come forward... would be pretty low. Most of the people we encounter... generally like to maintain their anonymity." It is also more possible that, under pressure of being reported, violent pimps and john will murder their victims to cover up abuse.



Getting Traffickers Out of the Sex Trade

So far, the only country to deal successfully with the violence inherent in prostitution is Sweden, which decriminalized being a sex worker—while making it illegal to purchase sexual services! This has led to a significant decrease in street prostitution, brothels, massage parlors, and the number of trafficked women. The Swedish program has been successful enough that the United Kingdom is now considering a similar approach.

However, no city in the U.S. seems to have considered it; in fact, San Francisco's Proposition K was very clearly written only to address the financial savings the city would incur. However, the price paid by sex workers through the legitimization of pimping would subject our cities to a much higher cost in terms of suffering and crime.

Despite today's uncertain economy, we should not lose sight of the morals and standards that made America great. Policy decisions should be made based on what is best for our citizens, not what will look best on a balance sheet. ■

POLLY'S GUIDE TO A SAFE & HAPPY HOLIDAY

- * Make sure Christmas trees are well anchored and watered so they do not become a fire hazard.
- * Keep all breakable Christmas ornaments, electrical extensions and burning objects (candles, incense and potpourri pots) out of small children's reach.
- * Make sure your fireplace is screened and all trees, presents, and children are kept away from the fire.
- * When wrapping presents, keep scissors out of children's hands.
- * Make sure infants and toddlers don't play with ribbon.
- * When involving children in holiday baking, make sure adults handle all of the hot items.
- * While shopping, never let your children out of your sight.
- * If your child is lost in a mall or department store, demand that the store take appropriate action.
- * Follow all age guidelines on toys and do not deviate from them.
- * Teach children not to succumb to temptation of toys or candy in a shopping environment.
- * Request an escort back to your car when you are finished shopping at night.
- * Never leave your children unattended in a car.
- * Create well-supervised activities for children during Christmas break.

Toy Safety Tips for Holiday Shoppers

- * Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child. For infants, toddlers and all children who still mouth objects, avoid toys with small parts that could pose a fatal choking hazard.
- * Look for sturdy construction, such as tightly secured eyes, noses and other potential small parts.
- * For all children under age 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- * Do not purchase electric toys with heating elements for children under age 8.
- * Be a label reader. Look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide.
- * Check instructions for clarity. They should be clear to you, and when appropriate, to the child.
- * Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys, which can cause suffocation, before they become deadly playthings.



Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

JOIN THE FOUNDATION AND HELP FIGHT CRIME!

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Enclosed please find my tax-deductible donation.
Please make donations payable to the KlaasKids Foundation.

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A mile a minute....
that is how fast your child can disappear