

# 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

**T**his edition of the *Klaas Action Review* is focused primarily on technology. We explore how social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace have become virtual 21<sup>st</sup> century milk cartons for missing children. We look at other Internet-based innovations, from home and abroad, that assist in the identification and recovery of missing persons. Technology expert Ben Levitan teaches us why cell phones are a good investment for kids and how simply dialing 911 can affect the recovery of a missing child.

Suzanne DiNubile explains why the California legislature must pass Assembly Bill 755, which will protect children who use social networking sites from registered sex offenders. KlaasKids and our coalition of partners also turned to the Internet to identify and recover human trafficking victims after inclement weather drove them indoors at Super Bowl XLV. Finally,

we pay tribute to our dear friend and advisor Barry Blansett who lost his courageous battle against the ravages of lung disease.

Not every parent has the good fortune to have their missing child profiled on television or in nationally distributed magazines. Most families must find other ways to raise awareness and distribute information about their missing children. Social networks have a reach that extends around the world with hundreds of millions of profiles, and the ability to embrace causes. These invaluable resources provide no-cost opportunities that were inconceivable

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## A MESSAGE FROM MARC

when Polly was kidnapped in 1993.

If your child is missing, you can take advantage of opportunities available from Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube. These free sites enable you to create informational profiles of your missing child. You can post articles, photographs, testimonials, blogs, and videos. By organizing your profile and editing content to create a compelling presence, you can link and interact with vast networks of individuals and organizations interested in your issue. Cross-pollinating with true crime websites like Websleuths provides you with allies who are dedicated to maintaining interest in and solving ongoing cases.

A Southern California mother whose two children were reported missing 15 years ago tracked them down in Florida using Facebook. The children's father had taken off with them in 1995 when they were still toddlers, but in March 2010 the mother found her daughter's profile after searching for her name on the social networking site. My friend Robert McConnell used Facebook to locate his daughter, who was illegally kidnapped to Indonesia by a non-custodial mother in 2003. Personally, I regularly use my Facebook profile picture to post photos of America's missing.

Child abduction is a big problem in China, with thousands of children

disappearing each year. According to the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, as many as 1.5 million children are beggars. Most of them have been forced into servitude and many of them are kidnap victims. A viral Twitter (Weibo) campaign, launched on January 25 by social scientist Yu Jianrong, encourages citizens to post photos of child beggars and compare them with photos of missing children. More than 220,000 netizens responded and so far six children have been reunited with their families.

In an unrelated case, 33-year-old Peng Gaofeng recovered his son who was kidnapped in 2008 through a micro blog. When law enforcement efforts proved futile, Peng posted his son's picture on Weibo. A newspaper reporter tweeted about Peng's micro blog campaign to his 110,000 followers. It was reposted more than 5,000 times before a citizen compared the missing boy's photo to a child who looked just like him. It turned out to be the same child. The reunion video posted on the Internet became an online sensation and captured the attention and respect of authorities.

The Internet empowers the families of missing persons. With new and innovative applications constantly in development, the possibilities inherent in social network websites and other online innovations are limited only by our imaginations. ■

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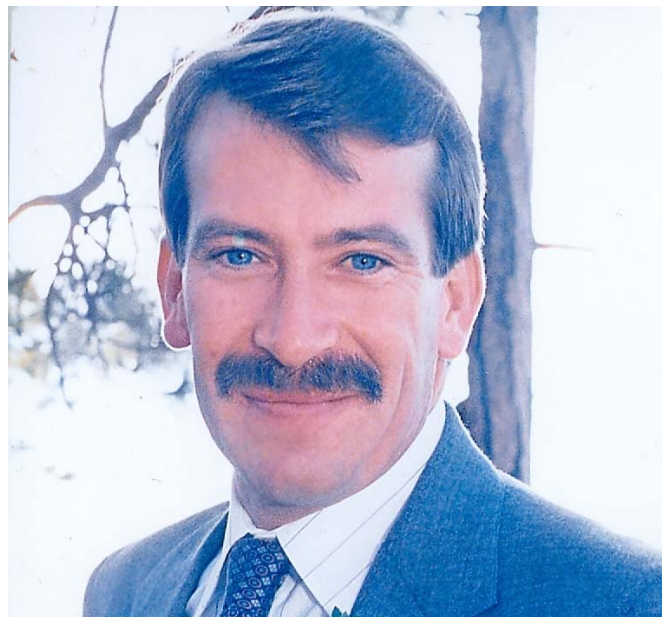
## BARRY BLANSETT ~ IN MEMORIAM

Last month, KlaasKids Foundation friend and advisor Barry Blansett succumbed to emphysema, dying at his home in Petaluma, California.

I met Barry on October 4, 1993, three days after Polly was kidnapped. He was the 35-year-old, up and coming, well-connected publisher of Petaluma's bi-weekly newspaper, the *Argus Courier*. He came quietly into our lives, inquiring into our well-being as everyone else focused on Polly. He assured Violet and me that his newspaper would treat us fairly and that local resources would be made available to us. He secured a free apartment so we wouldn't be burdened by expenses, and then moved us into the spare bedroom of his home. Barry made sure that our spiritual and medical needs were met. He provided sage counsel and never asked for anything in return. He was instrumental in the planning of Polly's memorial service and eventually we traveled together on vacations and business.

The years were tough on Barry but he never complained. Ignoring his own failing health, he continued to help others in need.

How do you measure the love and gratitude you feel for another human being? By the tears you shed or the guilt you feel when the grim reaper emerges from the shadows? By the memories you guard, the experiences that you share or the regret that surely invades your consciousness? I think that it is all of these things and more. I know that I shake my head in sadness as I am reminded again that life is not fair, that shit happens, and that you have to deal with it.



Barry Blansett  
August 27, 1958 - February 7, 2011

I have experience with death. In one year I lost my daughter, my younger brother and my beloved grandmother. For a number of years I wanted to die, but that is no longer the case. Death haunts my existence and creeps into my thoughts daily. I wonder about my own death; how I will face my end and whether I can leave this world with dignity and grace. I have great admiration for the way that Barry approached his death. After repeated stays in the hospital to treat his diseased lungs, he elected to contact Hospice so that he could die at home, surrounded by those he loved and those who love him.

Barry had a great heart and was a great and loyal friend. He understood that he was too young to be making these kinds of plans, but he also understood that he has no choice in the matter. He was a man of uncommon courage, of exceptional dignity and poised grace. His loss leaves a void that will never be filled. ■

## E-STOP: PROTECTING CHILDREN ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

**K**laasKids is keenly aware that few safeguards exist to protect children who use the Internet. As a leader in child safety legislation, KlaasKids has steadfastly continued its efforts to protect children from sexual predators online.

One in five children are solicited sexually while on the Internet. At the same time, more and more minors are spending time online. There is also a growing divide between the “tech-savvy” of children and their parents, resulting in diminished parental oversight.

California Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani, in conjunction with the KlaasKids Foundation for Children and former Facebook Chief Privacy Officer Chris Kelly, has introduced Assembly Bill 755 (AB 755), the California’s Electronic Securing and Targeting of Online Predators Act (E-STOP) legislation.

KlaasKids is trying to bring a framework to California that has proven successful in New York, where similar E-STOP legislation has contributed to making the Internet safer by removing tens of thousands of convicted sex offenders from social networks.

### What AB 755 Will Do

AB 755 amends sections of California Penal Code Section 290 to bring registration and notification requirements that already exist under Megan’s Law up to current technology.

AB 755 will require convicted sex offenders to register their email addresses, online identifiers, and service providers with the California Department of Justice. That information will then be made available to social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, to assist them in removing sexual predators from their sites.



Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani

In addition, AB 755 will require the Sex Offender Management Board, part of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, to conduct a study and evaluate alternatives to the STATIC 99 sex offender evaluation tool. It is the job of the Sex Offender Management Board to keep up on the actuarial instruments that they use. AB 755 holds their feet to the fire to do their job.

There is a long history of controversy concerning California’s overreliance on the STATIC 99 evaluation tool. Many mental health experts believe that it has been the basis by which countless erroneous decisions have been made that have had a negative effect on public safety.

A journal article re: Static 99 was published in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* (JAAPL) in September 2010 that lays out the criticisms of this method.

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# E-STOP: PROTECTING CHILDREN ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

## How E-STOP worked in NY

Facebook, the largest growing social network, with approximately 600 million users worldwide, has led the way in supporting E-STOP. The State of New York's E-STOP was first proposed by then-Facebook Chief Privacy Officer Chris Kelly in 2006. At the end of 2010, Attorney General Cuomo announced that Facebook and MySpace had removed approximately 11,721 profiles associated with 4,336 dangerous sexual predators registered in New York since the law was implemented in 2008.

The E-STOP framework allows more effective policing and removal of sex offenders from on-line sites where minors congregate.

## Request for Support of AB 755

Last year, KlaasKids testified in support of the Torres Bill AB 2208 in California. Unfortunately, it did not pass. We hope that AB 755 will have the bipartisan and industry support it will need to become law. The bill will be heard in an upcoming Assembly Public Safety Committee hearing in April 2011.

Although it is widely accepted that sex offenders are increasingly using social networking sites to lure children, some critics believe that legislation such as AB 755 is useless and will have no effect on discouraging sexual predators from engaging with and possibly abusing children online. We faced the same type of criticism when fighting for the enactment of California Penal Code section 290, which created the Megan's Law online registration and notification requirements.

Like the proposed AB 755, Megan's Law's registration and notification requirements are self-policing, in that they depend upon sex

offenders to come forward and provide valid information. Despite these criticisms, Megan's Law is widely considered to be a success. Our view is that many sex offenders do not want or need the temptation of social networking sites. In addition, NY E-STOP has a proven track record of removing sexual predators from social networking sites. When AB 755 becomes law, California will establish a higher-standard registration protocol that addresses current technologies as well as imposing stiff penalties for non-compliance.

Some critics will argue that this is not a good time to push for safety legislation, when our budget woes are such that basic governmental services are being severely reduced or cut altogether. However, we believe that economic challenges are no excuse for placing safety on the back burner. AB 755 has been crafted to acknowledge that California is a worldwide leader in technology innovation. It is structured to be pro-business and to help industry leaders keep their minds on innovation.

Together, we need to be mindful of our society's changing relationship with technology, and little by little pass constitutional and effective laws that accommodate our transforming technical landscape. ■

Please help us by supporting AB 755.

The text of the bill is available at this link:

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill\\_number=ab\\_755&sess=CUR&house=B&author=galgiani](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=ab_755&sess=CUR&house=B&author=galgiani)

Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani's website and contact information:

<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a17/>

## SEX & THE SUPER BOWL - FACES

**K**laaskids and our coalition partners conducted the third consecutive Super Bowl outreach to identify and rescue human trafficking victims at Super Bowl XLV. However, this year's effort was hindered by a snow and ice storm. Unfortunately, the inclement weather negatively impacted our ability to learn the area and find the hot spots.

We knew that if we couldn't get out, pimps, johns, and prostitutes couldn't get out either. We also knew that the pimps were not about to lose money during Super Bowl week, and would turn to the Internet to advertise their girls. The websites for these services are well known. So, we searched websites known for advertising prostitution looking for underage girls.

Most advertisements show pictures of women and girl in various degrees of undress. After having viewed pages and pages of these advertisements, I was concerned that those images would stick in my head. However, it's not the butts and breasts I see when I close my eyes - it's the faces.

The scared, empty, emotionless, sad, shamed, drugged, angry and hollow faces of Black, White, Hispanic, Asian girls and women posing on beds, in chairs, leaning up against walls, on the floor - most images prominently showing their rear ends. However, it's their eyes and their faces that I can't get out of my mind. The last time I saw eyes so empty, hollow and sad all at one time was when I prosecuted a sex offender who had videotaped a young boy. At one point in the video, the camera zoomed in on the boy's face and it was the saddest image I had ever seen. These girls' eyes and faces told the same story as his - unhappy with the circumstance, acquiescent to the act, ashamed of themselves, void of any sparkle of life or hope in their eyes.



This photo is of a young girl being advertised on Backpage.com during Super Bowl

I don't want you to think that every single ad contained a picture of an unwilling participant, because there were advertisements with happy, smiling women. However, the resigned hopelessness was unmistakable in the pictures of those who were being forced to pose.

Their ages ranged from approximately 12 or 13 to 59. We paid attention to the ones who looked young despite the fact that they were advertised as being 18 - 26. There were hundreds of advertisements. 120 advertisements were posted between 12 am and 1am Friday morning.

Fortunately, we were able to identify some of these girls - even identify the hotels/motels they were photographed at. We located one underage girl and turned the information over to the police. One of the advertisements was for a girl who was on my flight from Atlanta to Dallas. She was over 18 years of age, but I had identified her as a potential prostitute while waiting to board my flight. She was one of at least 3 girls and at least four pimps on my flight to Dallas.

These images will forever haunt me. If there was ever any doubt about whether or not these girls are doing this willingly - their faces told the story. Those pictures don't lie. Those eyes don't lie. ■

## HOW CELL PHONES CAN SAVE CHILDREN'S LIVES

**T**he next time that your child asks, "Mom can I have a cell phone?" don't cringe at the question. Your answer might make the difference between life and death. Cell phones are one of the best ways to recover a missing child. Unfortunately, most police departments don't have the knowledge to use cell phones effectively. In this article, we will teach you what you need know to protect your child.

On Sunday, February 20, 2011, 12-year-old Priscilla disappears outside of a suburban Atlanta mall. She calls her mother that night, apparently from the perpetrator's phone, but the Caller ID shows "Private Number." The police don't do anything with this information. Four days later, she makes another call, which is traced to a street corner in Las Vegas, Nevada. Priscilla is recovered and is safe, but her family had to spend an agonizing five days worrying about her safety. Could the situation have been different if the Georgia police and Priscilla's family had known more about cell phones? What critical information were they lacking?

1) Phone Companies Can Help – Even if the display says "Private Number," there is no such thing as an anonymous call. Georgia police, in Priscilla's case, needed to call her mom's phone company to find the phone number that had called. If the call was placed from a regular phone, the phone company would have been able to tell the police the address of the caller immediately. If the call came from a cell phone, the phone company could provide the police with the phone number and which cell phone company was being used. This information could have been used to contact the cell phone provider to determine which tower the call came from. Knowing the location of the cell tower would

have narrowed Priscilla's location down to an area of about 700 acres. What if Priscilla was in a car being whisked away? The cell phone company knows on which cell phone tower a call originates and on which tower it ends. The police can use this information to determine the direction that a phone is moving and even an approximate speed. This could help them to choose an effective location for a roadblock.



2) Teach Your Child to Call 911 First – Children should be taught to call 911 whenever they are in trouble, not to call Mom. When you call 911 from a cell phone, the operator immediately sees your location on a map within an accuracy of about 140 feet. This information can be key in helping find a missing child quickly. You should also teach your children to call 911 even if they can't risk speaking. Help will be on the way.

If you are in someone's house and dial 911 on a landline and hang up, 911 will call back. If you don't answer they will send police who will break down the door if there is no response. Teach your child if they can't talk to dial 911 and put the phone down. Police will be on the way.

3) Do a Three-Way Call to 911 - Priscilla's mom could have put Priscilla's call on hold and made a three-way call to 911. Learn how to do this. The 911 system is designed to be able to pull

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## HOW CELL PHONES CAN SAVE CHILDREN'S LIVES

the location of all parties on the line. I've found that not all centers have implemented this feature, so talk with your local government and make sure this feature is available. There is a city councilman in charge of 911.

Now let's get back to that opening question of, "Mom, can I have a cell phone?" As a parent, what is the best way to answer this question? Clearly a cell phone can be a distraction to a child and is a major expense. Luckily there is a way to provide both safety and education at little to no cost. Do you have an old phone you are no longer using? By law, any phone **MUST** be able to dial 911. It doesn't matter if the account is past due, if you don't have service or even if the phone is reported stolen. If it is charged and is in a cell phone coverage area, it can call 911.

Step 1 in teaching children the responsible use of a phone is to give your child an old cell phone and teach them that the phone is **ONLY** for emergencies. It costs you nothing and they may be satisfied with the ownership and responsibility (for a while). They now have a powerful tool if anyone approaches them.

Step 2 may be to provide your child with a "pre-paid" phone, like a Tracfone. Pre-paid phones work just like phones with a yearly

contract. Pre-paid phones can be bought nearly anywhere for about \$20. Once the phone is charged you can use it to call 911. A new phone will usually come with about 10 minutes of free calling time to numbers other than 911. If you want to use the phone after you have used your 10 minutes, you must "restock" the phone with minutes by purchasing them from a store, the Internet or even the phone. Providing your child with 15 minutes of calling per month will teach them to be judicious in their calling and will give them a way to call 911.

Priscilla is safe in Atlanta after a frightening cross-country trip. The saga ended and Priscilla was recovered because the Las Vegas police knew to seek help from the cell phone company and were able to identify her location.

Now that you better understand how cell phones can keep your child safe the question, "Mom, can I have a cell phone?" might actually bring a smile to your face. As for what to say when your child says, "Mom, I want an iPhone," I can't help you there. That's out of my area of expertise. ■

*Ben Levitan has spent more than 25 years in the development of the cellular telephone system for major carriers and holds 27 patents.*



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