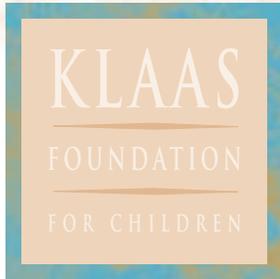


# KLAAS ACTION REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARC KLAAS FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN



## A MESSAGE FROM MARC

**S**anta had come and gone. The cookies and milk left by the hearth were eaten, the presents were opened, and brightly colored wrapping paper lay strewn about the living room. Mom and Dad were drinking coffee, content that another Christmas had brought joy to ten-year-old Alex and seven-year-old Robert. The children were sorting piles of gifts and planning their day around the endless possibilities presented by their newly acquired treasures.

Alex asked his mother if he could go across the street to play in the park. Mom said, "Sure. As long as you take your brother with you." Since it was an overcast and cold day, the children bundled up in their new jackets and hats and went to the park with arms full of model airplanes, baseballs, and bats.

About thirty minutes later, while the children were happily engaged playing with their toys, a nice-looking man in a Santa hat, driving a shiny red truck, called the children over. "Will you kids help me find my lost puppy?"

"No," Alex said. "We don't know you."

"I'll give you twenty dollars," he said, proffering a wad of bills.

"Don't go," Alex said to his little brother. "We don't know him."

The man persisted, so the children grabbed their toys and walked through the park toward their home.

When they got near the street the man in the truck was waiting for them. "Will you kids help me find my puppy?" he asked.

Alex took Robert's hand, pulled him close and whispered in his ear, "Come with me. We'll make an obstacle course through the park so that he can't follow us in his truck." As they ran away, seven-year-old Robert's cap fell off and the man left his truck to retrieve it. He called after the retreating seven-year-old, "Little boy, come back and get your hat." Robert tried to pull away, but Alex held his hand and pulled him along.

Alex told his brother to "stay with me," as they dodged and parried their way through the park. Eventually, they arrived at a corner of the park away from their home. The boys crossed the street and approached a house that had children they did not know playing in the front yard. Alex asked the kids if he could talk to their mother, and they all went inside while Alex called his mom on the telephone.

A few days later, Alex saw the

*(cont. on page 5)*

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## VITAL EXPANSION AND OUTREACH IN 1998

The end of the year is a time for taking stock—and for making resolutions for the coming year. The non-profit KlaasKids Foundation was originally created with a \$2,000 investment and the objective of stopping crimes against children. The following programs and projects, many of which may be found nowhere else, are in full implementation as we head into 1999.

### **The National Child Safety Awareness Project:**

Incorporates several programs reaching out to families and providing services and information on child safety. So far, 85 U.S. communities have benefited from sponsored town hall meetings featuring local experts addressing local solutions and programs. Child safety and community action information has been distributed to the more than 80,000 children who were fingerprinted and photographed at no cost to families. The Print-A-State Program targets adding 150 communities to the program in 1999.

*The KlaasKids Foundation was created with a \$2,000 investment and the objective of stopping crimes against children.*

**The Klaas Action Review:** This quarterly newsletter is a stand-alone resource for educating interested parties on a wide range of children's issues; featuring guest articles by acknowledged experts, legislative updates, and a focus on proactive participation.

**The KlaasKids Website:** [www.klaaskids.org](http://www.klaaskids.org) has been accessed an average of 90,000 times per month during 1998. Covering a wide range of child-related topics, it includes the *Klaas Action Review Online*; a review of Megan's Law for each state; a review of state victims rights statutes and amendments; child safety information; and links to other informational websites.

**Missing...What to Do if Your Child Disappears:** Critics are applauding the 1998 release of this unique instructional video which educates parents on the steps to take if their child is kidnapped. It utilizes the resources of the FBI, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the California Department of Justice, and many other national experts.

**Legislative Efforts:** This year the Foundation inspired Wisconsin's "Two Strikes" law for sexual predators, which requires that a second conviction for child molestation result in a prison sentence of life without parole.

The Foundation was active in the passage of California's VCIN Law, California and New York's "Megan's Law," and the recently signed Volunteers for Children Act, as well as the 1994 Federal Crime Bill.

Current efforts include the Children's Privacy and Parental Protection Act, H.R. 4258; the "No Second Chances For Murderers, Rapists & Child Molesters Act;" prevention investments for at-risk youth; H.R. 4531, the "Sherrice Iverson Good Samaritan Act;" and the Victims Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We have been in the forefront of the fight for "Truth In Sentencing" legislation for violent offenders; full implementation of the Interstate Identification Index; and "Joan's Law," which mandates a life sentence without parole child murder while engaged in the commission of a felony.

**Public Awareness Campaign:** Foundation representatives have appeared on virtually every major network news magazine, morning show, news broadcast, and syndicated talk show, advocating child safety issues and prevention programs for at-risk youth. Marc Klaas' editorials on children's issues have appeared in newspapers including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *San Diego Union Tribune*, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Portland Oregonian*, and *Los Angeles Daily News*.

**Fight Back—Safeguarding Your Community:** This workbook provides guidelines and proven ideas from across the country to help citizens and organizations form partnerships that positively and proactively impact individual communities, and assist them in making their cities and towns more safe for children.

**Missing Child Family Support:** Vanessa Smith (Merced, CA), Kristin Hatfield (Oklahoma City, OK), Amber Hagerman (Arlington, TX), Kirstin Smart (San Luis Obispo, CA), Cody and India Smith (Dayton, OH), Michelle Montoya (Sacramento, CA), Sabrina Eisenberg (Tampa, FL), Christina Williams (Seaside, CA), Morgan Nick (Alma, AR), Tracy Rene Conrad (Hanford, CA), Raina Bo Shirley (Potter Valley, CA), Michael Lyons (Yuba City, CA), Morgan Violi (Bowling Green, KY), Brittany Martinez (Elgin, IL), Carly Martinez (El Paso, TX), Maddie Clifton (Jacksonville, FL), and Jenny Lin (Castro Valley, CA).

**KlaasKids Scholarship:** College freshman Elliott Groves was awarded the 1998 KlaasKids Scholarship. Established in memory of Polly Klaas, the scholarship goes to recipients with a record of volunteer activities and one year of volunteer work for the KlaasKids Foundation. ■

# PAROLE WATCH: KEEPING AMERICA'S "MOST UNWANTED" BEHIND BARS

By Joe Diamond

As crime victims know all too well, paroling violent felons endangers society—paroled convicts, for instance, commit 30% of all murders. Thankfully, many states have eliminated parole and other forms of early release for dangerous offenders. But thousands of felons committed crimes before these laws were passed and are thus still eligible, and many more states still grant early parole.

ParoleWatch is a new public safety program which utilizes the Internet to inform citizens about imminent parole hearings for violent criminals. Currently serving communities in New York, the organization plans to be nationwide within a few years.

When I started ParoleWatch, Marc Klaas accepted my invitation to join the ParoleWatch advisory board. Marc has since begun discussions with California officials about West Coast expansion. Our goals include:

- Creating an Internet clearinghouse with records on America's violent offenders.
- "Localizing" this clearinghouse so the public can easily access information on felons who have committed crimes in their community.
- Providing regular public alerts, along the lines of "America's Most Wanted," about offenders coming up for parole in the near future.
- Providing grassroots training and tools to empower communities to block early release of the most



ParoleWatch Founder  
Joe Diamond

dangerous felons threatening their communities. Our website allows users to access information on currently jailed violent offenders, based on a variety of criteria including names, crimes, and the counties where they were prosecuted. Most importantly, it lets them find when the Parole Board plans to review a felon's parole application. Eventually people in every state will be just a few mouse-clicks away from this kind of data.

As ParoleWatch's visibility grows, more victims are contacting us. Mardy Sitzer, a woman from New York City, emailed me about her assailant, eight-time felon Ryan Randolph, who comes up for parole in January 1999. Six years ago, Randolph broke into Mardy's apartment, sneaked up on her in the kitchen and slammed her face into the floor. He would have raped her, too, if Mardy hadn't managed to grab a knife and fight him off.

When I checked Randolph's record in our database, I was shocked to discover that his attack on Mardy resulted in a mere burglary conviction. Subsequently I discovered that

the judge and defense attorney secretly plea-bargained Randolph to this minor charge for a sentence of six to twelve years without notifying Mardy or the prosecutor.

Randolph is the test case for the ParoleWatch Action Center. Our Action Center features cases of imminent concern—dangerous criminals eligible for parole now and in coming months. The Action Center is the heartbeat of ParoleWatch, enabling residents of a community to learn the details of a case, including victim impact information. Mardy's case illustrates inherent flaws in the justice system that require serious attention, such as plea-bargaining and incompetent judges. The New York Parole Board might easily glance at Randolph's criminal history file and conclude that he is "merely" a burglar who poses no real threat to society. ParoleWatch is working with Mardy to ensure that the Board knows the truth.

The ParoleWatch Action Center enables citizens to influence and block an inmate's parole. Upon becoming familiar with an Action Center case, you can sign an online petition that we will forward to the Parole Board. We provide names phone numbers and email addresses of elected officials who should be contacted for help.

Public pressure can affect the Parole Board's decisions—victims' advocacy groups have successfully blocked parole for years through petitioning, letter-writing campaigns, and media pressure. Visit the ParoleWatch website at [www.parolewatch.org](http://www.parolewatch.org) to learn more or to volunteer to help. ■

© 1998 by the KlaasKids Foundation. The *Klaas Action Review* is published quarterly for Foundation members. Dedicated to the memory of Polly Klaas, the Foundation's purpose is to inform parents, children, and communities about how to prevent crimes against children through personal action and support of legislation. Editorial: Freeman Communications, Berkeley, CA. Design Concept: Blackburn Design, Petaluma, CA. Printing: Marin Stat, San Rafael, CA.

# NEW CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS HELPS TO PROTECT CHILDREN

By Rep. Nick Lampson, Texas

**W**hen I was elected to Congress in 1996, I was eager to tackle a variety of issues. But, soon after I arrived in Washington, my legislative priorities changed forever. In the spring of 1997, 12-year-old Laura Kate Smither of Friendswood, Texas, was abducted while she was out jogging. Despite the valiant efforts of law enforcement and the entire Friendswood community, Laura's body was found two and a half weeks later.

The devastation felt by the Smither family and the determination of the volunteers inspired me to establish the first Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, including nearly 100 members, to provide a loud and unified voice for missing children advocates within Congress.

## Establishing a Good Samaritan Law

This past September, I introduced the Sherrice Iverson Act, which requires all 50 states to have a Good Samaritan law to create criminal penalties for witnesses who fail to report sexual crimes against children to authorities. If a state does not pass this law, it would become ineligible to receive certain federal grant funds.

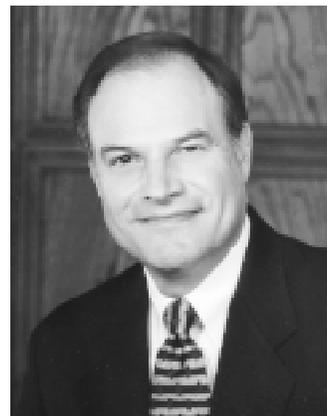
The bill was named in memory of seven-year-old Sherrice Iverson, who was molested and killed in a Nevada casino in May 1997. David Cash, Jr. allegedly saw his best friend, Jeremy Strohmeyer, sexually assault Iverson, yet never reported the crime. The fact that David Cash apparently stood by and allowed this heinous crime to happen, and then boasted of his lack of concern on a live radio call-in show, personally sickens me and makes Sherrice's terrible death even more tragic.

This bill garnered more than 25 co-sponsors in Congress and won the support of the KlaasKids Foundation and the Fraternal Order of Police. Although this bill was not debated during the 105th Congress, I will reintroduce the Sherrice Iverson Act during the next session in January.

I encourage everyone to contact their U.S. Representative to ask for his or her support on this very important legislation. In a perfect world, reporting crimes against our children would be common sense. This case clearly demonstrates that this is not a perfect world, and Congress needs to pass legislation to make sure witnesses do report incidents of violence against children.

## Publicizing Missing Children

While we work to advance child safety legislation in Washington, my fellow Caucus members and I are also initiating community, state, and national efforts to combat the growth of child exploitation and abduction throughout the country. Once I found that printing missing children's pictures on congressional envelopes was permissible, I made sure that no envelope left my office without a picture of a missing child. Studies show that one out of seven children are recovered because someone recognizes their picture somewhere. I will continue urging colleagues in Congress to print pictures of missing children on their official stationery.



Texas Representative  
Nick Lampson

## Child Safety Workshops and Training

Over the last two years, we have brought Ernie Allen and Pete Banks of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to my district to host Child Safety Workshops. These workshops educated professionals who deal with children on abuse and abduction, including a number of law enforcement officers from the area. In addition, a number of police chiefs from my district have come to Washington over the past year to attend the Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Program. This Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention program offers law enforcement officers a basic three-day course with tips on investigating both family and non-family abductions and runaways. Law enforcement executive officers also can receive training on how to set up a quick response plan in the event a child is reported missing.

## The Safe Place Program: Havens for Kids in Trouble

I have also asked several businesses and community organizations in Southeast Texas to create safe havens for

(Cont. on page 5)

kids in trouble. The YNCA's Safe Place program links the business community, youth shelters, youth service agencies, and dedicated volunteers together to provide young people in crisis a safe route to professional resources and a way to stay off the dangerous streets. Safe Place provides immediate help for young people when and where they need it—in their own neighborhoods. The program creates a network of "safe places," businesses and public buildings that display a bright yellow and black Safe Place sign for any child in need of help.

The unique aspect of Safe Place is that the business sector joins with youth shelters and dedicated volunteers to provide refuge and support for these young people. Businesses can participate by becoming a Safe Place site as well as sponsoring youth-related programs with much-needed funding. In 1989, Domino's Pizza became the national Safe Place site sponsor. Many other business across the country, including fast food chains, convenience stores, and merchandise outlets, have agreed to become Safe Place sites.

Other non-business organizations are also getting involved. For example, fire stations are one of the most popular Safe Place sites throughout the country. Hospitals, libraries, emergency centers, and other community agencies have volunteered to be safe places for kids. In fact, some communities use their mass transit systems or other utility and service vehicles as the first point of contact with young people who are scared, confused, or even lost.

Finally, last year we helped launch a nationwide public service campaign designed to protect the most vulnerable of our children:—teenage girls between the ages of 12 and 17—supported by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America and Channel One.

But more needs to be done! I encourage all of you to get involved with programs in your community. As the father of two daughters, stories about abduction and exploitation send a chill up my spine—and as parents, you have the same feelings of fear. That's why we all need to work together to do anything we can to save a child's life or save a family from heart-breaking tragedy. ■

*Caucus members are initiating community, state, and national efforts to combat the growth of child exploitation and abduction throughout the country.*

## MESSAGE FROM MARC

(CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

man in the shiny red truck driving through the neighborhood. Now he is afraid to play in his front yard.

This disturbing holiday story demonstrates many of the important safety rules we should be teaching our children.

- Before going to the park Alex checked with his mom.
- Then, he went with his brother, and we all know that there is safety in numbers.
- He trusted his feelings. He knew that there was something wrong with the man in the red truck.
- When the man in the red truck called to them, Alex put distance between them. When his brother attempted to retrieve his hat, Alex refused to let go of his hand.
- Finally, Alex did an extraordinary thing: He approached strangers. He instinctively understood that certain strangers could be good and helpful. Children, mothers with children, police officers in uniform, and store clerks in the mall are the kinds of strangers that can assist children facing a potentially dangerous situation.

More than anything else, Alex used his brain. I think Alex is a hero because his brother is safe and he wasn't conned by the man's lure. He based his decisions upon the appropriateness of action. This is a story from which we can all learn. Alex's mother talks to her children about safety on a regular basis and it is obvious that these talks have served her boys well.

The holidays are fast approaching and this is a good time to reinforce simple but important safety rules with our children. During this season, we may tend to let our guard down. While most people are good and would never hurt a child, certain people cannot and should not be trusted.

- 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.
- Teach children not to succumb to the temptation of toys or candy in a shopping environment.
- Request an escort back to your car when you are shopping at night.
- Never leave your children unattended in a car.
- Create well-supervised holiday activities for your kids.

Have a happy and safe holiday season and please continue to support the important work of the KlaasKids Foundation. ■

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

*The KlaasKids Foundation relies entirely on the gifts of its thousands of wonderful supporters. It would be impossible to list each one of you due to lack of space; in this donor roster, we recognize those who have made a special effort, giving a gift of \$50 or more. However, gifts of any size are always welcome. Many thanks for your wonderful generosity on behalf of America's children.*

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*\* Cliff Harris was one of the lawyers for the prosecution in the Polly Klaas case. He passed away in November 1998. He will be greatly missed.*

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To join the KlaasKids Foundation, please fill out this form and return it to the address below. Your tax-deductible membership costs just \$15.00 per year, and includes a subscription to the quarterly *Klaas Action Review*, with news and information, practical tips, events, and more.

Members may also receive:

- Information on starting a National Community Empowerment program.
- Safety information for your children.
- Information about how to support legislation against crime in your state.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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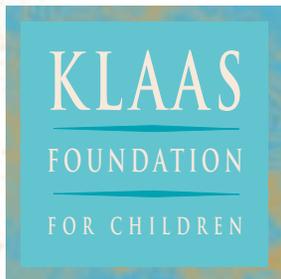
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