

# KLAAS ACTION

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# REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARC KLAAS FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN



## A MESSAGE FROM MARC

**T**here is much controversy currently surrounding my conditional support of Court TV's new program, *Confessions*, which shows the videotaped confessions of imprisoned murderers. I understand the pain of loss, for I too lost my child to a brutal, unrepentant killer. I, too, live with the reality of waking up every morning knowing that I will not see or speak to Polly, but only grasp fading memories of a time long past. I, too, go to sleep every night hoping beyond prayer that Polly will visit me in dreams, but knowing that she will not.

I have an overwhelming pain in my soul that will remain forevermore. It drives me crazy every time I see Polly's killer featured in the media—which is often—but I learned long ago that it is not about me, nor is it about him. Instead, it is about finding ways to stop the blood and being able to give our children a better world than was given to us.

Because of its real and raw brutality, *Confessions* may be one of the most difficult television shows ever scheduled for broadcast. However, I reserve my outrage for the constant diet of violence that America is spoonfed as entertainment and news. I am angry about a new movie that is about to come out, *Hannibal* (the sequel to *Silence Of The Lambs*), which makes a hero out of a cannibal serial killer. I am disturbed by serial killer websites; and the Son

of Sam discussing his transformation into a born-again Christian on television; and the fact that 35,000 Americans die as a result of gun violence annually. I also get tired of listening to defense lawyers' claims that their clients are poor, browbeaten innocents who were given too little attention by their fathers, or that the confessions were coerced or tortured out of them.

I do not believe that *Confessions* celebrates death and destruction. Instead, it exposes psychopaths in the starker, most unflattering light: as brutal, unrepentant monsters. I also believe that the show would be better served with analysis from psychologists, detectives, and prosecutors, and that victims' families should be forewarned whenever possible and given an opportunity to present their point of view.

America continues to wrestle with an epidemic of violence that is spinning out of control. A criminal confession exposes the truth about one aspect of that violence—it's not glam-

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## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION FOR OUR YOUTH

By David Kaczynski

**W**hen we hear the words "crime prevention," we usually think of state-of-the-art policing techniques, communities cooperating with law enforcement, surveillance systems, etc. Seldom do we think of children, except as actual or potential victims of violent crime. Yet it is a truism that all violent offenders were once children, and disturbingly—as newspaper headlines frequently remind us—some actually *are* children. The troubling stories behind the headlines point to a problem of national proportions.

They also serve to kindle fear in many adults, who tend to walk a wide path around groups of idle teens gathered on the sidewalk, their unbridled laughter hinting at disrespect, their adolescent energy perceived as disruptive or vaguely threatening. In my view, this

attitude of avoidance only increases our ignorance of what young people are thinking about these days, what their hopes and dreams consist of, and what kinds of support they need to pursue their dreams constructively.

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wife, Linda, that I had accepted the job, her first reaction was one of concern. "Is it dangerous?" she asked. In six-plus years working with troubled kids, I can truthfully say that I've never felt threatened.

But this is not to say that adolescents aren't sometimes dangerous. At least two kids I've worked with are now serving time in state prisons, convicted of violent felonies. Strangely, I wouldn't have singled out either one of them as a prime candidate for incarceration. One was quiet and withdrawn, hard to connect with, but generally respectful to adults. The other was bright, articulate, ambitious—some would say headstrong. We used to speculate that someday he'd become a lawyer.

Yet both these kids fit a certain profile. They grew up in poverty with drug-involved parents who seriously neglected them. Both were hard to reach. Both found it difficult to trust, having been let down too often by people who should have cared for them.

### Violent Kids from Single-Family Homes

I estimate that less than 10% of the troubled adolescents who come to our agency live with both biological parents. Many live in families stressed by drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, marginal homelessness, or other serious problems. Clearly, healthy families are essential to providing young people with the kind of support they need in order to succeed. Just as clearly, adolescents who don't receive this support at home are at high risk of dropping out of school, getting pregnant, becoming involved with drugs or gangs, and eventually winding up in the criminal justice system.

When I reflect on adolescence, often I think about the vulnerability I see in kids, and also about their openness. These traits are evident in teenagers everywhere, regardless of economic class or ethnic background. Some kids put up a tough facade, yet behind this mask is usually a child hungry for positive attention, yearning to have his self-worth validated, fundamentally optimistic in his view of life's possibilities. Styles and mores may change, but I doubt that teenagers themselves have changed significantly in the last 30 years. Still, despite dramatic increases in the pressures that teens must cope with, too many young people cannot count on their families or schools to provide them with the stability and emotional support they require.

### Creating a Partnership with Our Kids

The model for most prevention programs nationwide stresses an active, flexible partnership between youth, families, schools, agencies, governmental bodies, and

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## KLAAS VS. KACZYNSKI ON THE DEATH PENALTY

**K**laasKids Foundation president Marc Klaas and child advocate David Kaczynski (see his article, page 2), brother of convicted Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski, share a deep horror of the violence that has shattered both their families and a deep compassion for each other's experience and perspective. Together, they have embarked on nationwide college campus lecture tour to discuss their differences on the issue of the death penalty. Together and with the

audience, they explore the many aspects of this controversial public policy issue, with each position illuminated by his extraordinary personal experience.

*A Dialogue on the Death Penalty*, first held on September 7 in Plattsburgh, New York, explores the many facets of and deeply divisive issues surrounding the death penalty. For more information on this critical lecture series, contact the Lecture Bureau at (617)492-0355. ■

## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

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local communities. The focus is on strengthening the family while marshaling existing community resources to support the individual child, teaching teens the value of personal responsibility, positive decision-making, and community involvement. I'm convinced that what most youth want and expect from adults is that we be responsible and caring. They want to see successful people who are concerned about more than their own success. They want to be valued and included in the busy world that flows around them.

No one knows exactly how many serious crimes *did not* occur because prevention services (including individual and family counseling, case management, mentoring, advocacy, tutoring, and positive recreation) were provided to kids from troubled families. But for every two kids in our program who wound up in prison cells, I could cite dozens of happier outcomes—kids who stopped fighting and started talking, kids who returned to school and

graduated, kids who set positive goals for themselves. In essence, these are kids who started believing in themselves after they recognized that their communities were willing to invest in them. Seeing eagerness light the eyes of a neglected teen when she tastes success is enough to convince me that we have no right to give up on a child who hasn't given up on herself.

Obviously, there is no magic cure for all the serious problems which beset our communities and which result most tragically in crime and violence. Investing resources in youth, I believe, is less a guaranteed cure for certain ills than it is a commitment to certain values, to the community of generations, to community itself. I don't know the best way to measure this commitment's success. Perhaps someday we can look forward to having less rather than more prisons and seeing more at-risk youth go to college than end up in jail. For now, I feel a sense of accomplishment whenever a youth I've been working with asks, "Say, what kind of education do I need to get a job here?" ■

## CALIFORNIA BANS PROFITING ON "MURDERABILIA" INTERNET SALES

**I**n the last issue of the *Klaas Action Review*, we covered the fact that imprisoned murderers have been busily profiting from the sales of personal souvenirs, or "murderabilia," via the Web. The KlaasKids Foundation has been fighting to make this illegal, and in California, our efforts have met with success.

Signed into law by California Governor Davis on August 25, Senate Bill 1565 expands California's "Son of Sam law" to Internet commerce by seizing the profits of a sale when a representative of the felon or a third party sells any memorabilia or other item of a convicted felon, and the item's value has been enhanced by the notoriety of the crime. The new law also applies to sales of felon memorabilia by profiteers of the felony, which includes any third party who sells any memorabilia of the convicted felon. ■

## CALIFORNIA DNA DATABASE APPROVED

**P**assed by both houses of the California Legislature on August 30, SB 1818 requires the Department of Justice to develop a DNA database for all cases involving the report of an unidentified deceased person or a high-risk missing person, in order to match and compare recovered, unidentified DNA samples with those of reported missing persons. We strongly urge Governor Davis to sign SB 1818. ■

# A CALL FOR PARALLEL JUSTICE

By Susan Herman

Over the last two years, a startling series of crimes committed by teenage perpetrators has shocked the nation. For many Americans, the tragedy at Littleton, Colorado's Columbine High School will remain a turning point in our collective conscience. Crimes of such scale indelibly engrave themselves upon the landscape of our shared history.

Crimes like Columbine demonstrate that young people in every region of the nation—city, suburban, and rural—are capable of unthinkable violence and self-destruction. In the wake of each crime, public interest in teen crimes spikes, pundits wonder why and how such events happen, and policy makers, after offering sympathy and support for “the victims and their families,” focus public policy scrutiny on teen perpetrators. Many decry the fact that younger and younger kids are exhibiting violent behavior and offer numerous theories for this tragic turn of events.

But, in focusing on the increasingly young faces of violent criminals, we should not ignore the increasingly young faces of crime *victims*. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (1997), of the 22.3 million adolescents in the nation—kids ages 12-17—approximately 1.8 million have been victims of serious sexual assault; 3.9 million have been victims of serious physical assault; and nine million have witnessed serious violence. Further, the data shows teenagers are three times more likely to be victims of violent crimes than adults. The national prevalence and significance of teen victimization is supported by a wealth of other research evidence.

## The Impact of Crime on the Victims

School shootings and other high profile crimes yield a dramatic, nationwide soul-searching. But each day, crime harms the lives of American young people for whom there is no collective practical response. Most crime victims, those who are physically and economically harmed, endure mental anguish, and often carry those wounds alone for the rest of their lives.

Crime destabilizes victims' families and friends who sense a loss of trust, develop new fears, and reorder their lives to help their loved ones try to put the pieces back together. Each day, there is no collective response to crime in our nation, which devastates and undermines our national social compact and diminishes the quality of

community life for millions of young people, robbing our country of their full potential in the process.

Granted, over the past generation we have made progress to improve our response to individual victims. Most states now have crime victim compensation programs, but they are typically limited to victims of violent crime, impose burdensome bureaucratic hurdles to eligibility, and scarcely compensate for actual economic losses. All states now grant the victims' right to participate in criminal justice proceedings, but these rights apply only to the few victims for whom an offender is arrested and prosecuted, and do not begin to deal with victims' long-term emotional and economic needs. Some jurisdictions provide special social services to victims of crime such as shelters for victims of domestic violence, emergency day care, repairs for broken locks, and relocation away from intimidating gangs.

## Learning How to Do More for Victims

But these patchwork systems are just that. They do not represent a comprehensive, communal response to the consequences of crime or to the violations to our youngest citizens.

Furthermore, schools and other youth-service organizations which interact with young people every day may not effectively recognize the symptoms of victimization, let alone be prepared to respond to young victims' special needs. And traditional victim service agencies—to whom youth might be referred by schools and other agencies—are rarely trained in the unique needs of younger crime victims, or may not have resources, services, or facilities for young victims of crime.

I believe we must develop a new construct for our treatment of all crime victims, one that begins by stating that, just as a crime is a violation of societal norms, so too our response to crime should reflect societal values. When offenders are brought to the bar of justice, they are held accountable by the state for harms suffered by individuals. There is a societal response to the offender that says, “You violated the law and we will hold you accountable and punish you if it is appropriate, isolate you if needed, and offer you services to help reintegrate you into the community.”

The individuals who have been harmed—the victims of crime—have no comparable experience of a societal

response to them. There is no statement that says, "What happened to you was wrong." There is no statement of communal responsibility that says, "We will help you rebuild your life." The same event produces both an offender and a victim. Yet, as a society, we have created a path to justice only for offenders.

### **Establishing a System of Parallel Justice**

Why not pursue justice for both parties? Why not create a system of "parallel justice" for victims distinct from our efforts to apprehend, judge, and punish offenders? Why can't a call to 911 trigger two responses—an effort to apprehend the wrongdoer, and a separate effort to restore the young lives of victims? Justice for victims should not be dependent on the identification or conviction of the wrongdoer. It should be animated by a social obligation to those who suffer when the social compact is violated.

Regardless of who is found and prosecuted as a perpetrator of crime, it is painfully clear that many victims need a great deal of help to recover and rebuild their lives. Under a system of "parallel justice," all victims of crime would receive help to feel safe again, assistance in recovering from the trauma they suffer, and resources to regain control over their lives and a productive role in society.

The victims in school shootings, or any other highly publicized crimes—those who suffer the aftermath of physical wounds, the terrified witnesses, the families of those injured, and the entire community involved—deserve compassionate and immediate assistance. Every day there are thousands upon thousands of young victims of crime who also need and deserve our concern and society's help.

It is time to do more than our nation has ever done for crime victims. Even as the rate of violent crime continues to fall, we must address the millions of individual harms that crimes have caused. And, we must prepare for crimes to come. It is time to forge a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives, the mission of the National Center for Victims of Crime. Why not make rebuilding crime-damaged lives a core statement of collective purpose for our society? ■

*Susan Herman is the Executive Director of the National Center for Victims of Crime.*

## **MARC'S MESSAGE**

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orous, nor is it something to celebrate on any level. Instead, it may give us a small window into the bleak, vicious mind of evil. If society continues to accept a sanitized portrayal of evil, we will never learn how to effectively deal with it. But, if we are forced to accept its brutal reality, maybe we will be able to manage this epidemic of violence by more effectively assigning punishment to crime. And then, maybe there will be fewer victims, less violence, and a true legacy for all of our murdered loved ones.

Finally, we must work together to stop the violence that took these beloved lives. I have supported front- and back-end legislation to effectively deal with today's predators and prevent the current generation of children from becoming the next generation of America's Most Wanted. I believe that there is value in truth, and *Confessions* presents an unadulterated, albeit horrible, truth. I know that not everyone will be able to agree with me, but I hope that you can understand and accept the reasons for my position. ■

## **CORRECTION:**

Contrary to the article published in the last issue of the *Klaas Action Review*, the prosecutor in the Randall Cabral sentencing hearing did not disregard public safety in an attempt to bolster his resume. Cabral pleaded guilty to felony charges of attempted kidnapping, false imprisonment, and attempting to remove an officer's weapon; and to misdemeanor charges of battery on a police officer, resisting arrest and vandalism. Prosecutors offered no plea-bargain and over their written objections, the Court dismissed one felony count of false imprisonment before trial. The prosecutor did not attempt to dispatch Randall Cabral back onto the streets as I suggested, but instead argued before the court that Cabral should spend the maximum possible time in state prison.

These are the first substantive errors in the history of this newsletter, and in future editions we will redouble our efforts to maintain the dignity and integrity of the *Klaas Action Review* in our pursuit of truth. ■

# ENSURING CHILD SAFETY IN OUR SCHOOLS

By Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA)

**T**here are no greater legislative efforts than those that seek to protect our children. Among this year's Congressional bills are efforts to improve school security systems, target drug trafficking near schools, and begin a national dialogue on the roots of teen violence.

But no matter how many bills we pass in Congress or the President signs into law, the simple fact is that there is no replacement for the level of protections that we can provide our children ourselves.

Since a new school year is beginning, I've taken the opportunity to ask law enforcement professionals and school officials what they would like parents, teachers, and kids to know about preventing school violence. Following are their responses, along with valuable information from the National Crime Prevention Council's pamphlet, *A Dozen Things We Can Do*.

## For Parents

- Get involved. Take an active role in your child's school. Go to meetings; talk to staff and teachers. If possible, volunteer in the classroom with after-school programs. Raising children is a time-and-energy-intensive effort, but the rewards are well worth it.
- Don't just listen, hear. Listen to your children, but most importantly, hear what they have to say. And don't wait for a crisis; if you make two-way communication a part of your everyday life, you'll have an opportunity to head off crises before they happen, rather than after.
- Know your children's friends. Insist on learning where they hang out and what they're doing. It's difficult, because with the increasing number of single-parent households or households where both parents work, many children are left to their own devices after school and in the summer. Take advantage of YMCA/YWCA programs, city-run camps, and other activities to keep your children occupied and off the streets.

## For Students

- Speak up. Report suspicious or worrisome behavior or talk by other students to a teacher or counselor at your school, or tell your parents. The risk of telling is far outweighed by the possibility that you may save a life.
- Chill out. Learn how to manage your own anger effectively. Find ways to settle arguments that don't

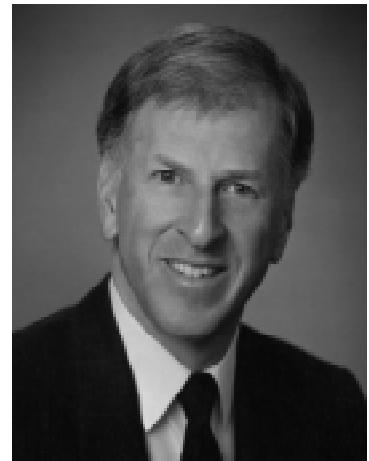
involve fighting. If you have to blow off steam, go for a run, or play basketball, or some other form of physical activity—anything that doesn't involve physical or verbal violence.

- Be a mentor to a younger student. If you don't have a mentor program in your school, start one. Many kids are lonely, troubled, and scared. Sometimes having an older kid to talk to is all they need. You'll also find that if you become a mentor to someone younger, it will help you, too. Your problems may not seem so overwhelming when you're helping someone else.
- Connect with others. Set up or join a peer mediation program, where trained students help classmates find ways to settle arguments without fists or weapons.

## For Teachers

- Involve your students in the non-violence movement. Have your students help set standards and penalties. Involve them in enforcing the rules. Students who are part of the solution are rarely part of the problem.
- Take off the blinders. Learn how to recognize the warning signs that a child might be headed for violence, and know the resources you have available to get help. It may sound like a broken record, but even if you've done all this before, back-to-school time is the perfect opportunity to refresh your memory.
- Keep it relative. Incorporate discussions on violence and its prevention into the subject matter you teach.
- Reach out. Invite parents on a regular basis to talk with you about their children's progress and any concerns they have. Send home notes celebrating children's achievements. Make sure your students' parents know that they are an important part of the process.

These tips unfortunately cannot guarantee that a tragedy won't happen at your children's school or in your neighborhood. But with community support and a unified effort, we can use them as a blueprint to stop problems before they start and provide a safe and healthy environment for our most treasured resources. ■



CA Congressman Mike Thompson

# KLAASKIDS SUPPORTS BRITISH SARAH'S LAW

The KlaasKids Foundation has taken on an international challenge: to help extend America's new sex offender registration laws to the United Kingdom. This campaign is based on the disappearance of eight-year-old kidnap, rape, and murder victim Sarah Payne from a wheatfield while playing with her siblings on July 1, 2000. Eighteen days later, little Sarah's naked and lifeless body was found in a nearby cornfield.

As the investigation focused on a recidivist sexual predator, Sarah's parents, Sara and Michael, demanded changes that would be more protective of British children. Rejecting offers to financially exploit the tragedy, the Paynes joined leading tabloid newspaper *News of the World* to campaign for life-prison terms for child killers and public access to identifying information on Great Britain's 110,000 registered sex offenders.

## Government Resisting Registration Campaign

Utilizing its formidable resources and with broad public support, the newspaper launched a petition drive demanding public access to and longer sentences for convicted sex offenders. The initial publishing of photographs and addresses of 50 known offenders ignited vigilante reprisals despite appeals against violence.

To counter scathing governmental and conservative media condemnation, the *News of the World* invited the KlaasKids Foundation to visit Great Britain and lobby on behalf of what has come to be known as Sarah's Law. During an exclusive July meeting with KlaasKids representatives, British Home Office Junior Secretary Paul Boateng acknowledged government intervention only when incarcerated sex offenders place lonely heart ads trolling for single mothers of young children, by warning the unsuspecting women. However, he then stated that community notification is not an option at this time.

"Suggesting that community notification will drive registered sex offenders underground belies the real problem," Klaas said in response to British government concerns. "The offenders are already underground and community notification is a remedy, not a symptom. As is illustrated by the American experience, harsh and punitive penalties for failing to comply with the terms of sex offender registration encourage full compliance."

Although infrequent vigilante reprisals like the 1993 burning of a registered offender's home are commonly referenced, numerous studies indicate that very few registered offenders in America have ever been threat-

ened by the public. According to Klaas, similar concerns were expressed in the U.S., but imposing prison penalty enhancements for individuals who misuse the information has proven an effective solution.

## When the People Demand Change

On September 12, Sara and Michael Payne delivered 700,000 petition signatures to the Home Office. According to Klaas, who returns to Great Britain on September 25 to address the annual Labor Party convention, "It is our fervent hope that the British Government, which now stands alone in opposition, will acknowledge the will of the people and replicate America's bold and successful experiment with community notification. Only then will the *News of the World* abdicate their leadership role in protecting Britain's children through proactive advocacy of Sarah's Law." ■

## SOME KIDNAPPINGS HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS

On August 10, a kidnapper snatched an unsuspecting eight-year-old girl as she walked home alone from school in a small California town. He threw her into the open door of his car and shackled her with chains. For more than two days he drove aimlessly through the San Francisco Bay Area as an anxious community desperately searched for the young victim.

On Saturday, August 12, the kidnapper pulled into a nearly empty industrial complex, parked his car, and went to visit an ex-employer. The little girl noticed the fistful of keys on a chain in the ignition, grabbed them, and managed to release the padlock that secured her in the vehicle. When he emerged from the office, he chased her into the path of an oncoming truck.

She screamed to the driver, "Save me, I've been kidnapped." The driver heard her, took her in, and stared down the criminal, who finally fled. The driver was able to give a description of the kidnapper's car and its license plate number to police. Less than 24 hours later, recently paroled felon Curtis Dean Anderson was back in jail, arrested for kidnapping.

This is perhaps the most important message of all: that sometimes they do come back, and that hope shines eternal. ■

# JOIN THE FOUNDATION AND HELP FIGHT CRIME!

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: \_\_\_\_\_

As a personal gift, you will also receive the Children's Identification Packet and a beautiful "Polly, We Love You" pin, in memory of our inspiration, Polly Klaas.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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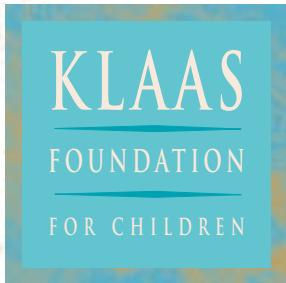
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*Be sure to check out our website at <http://www.klaaskids.org> for regular updates and information on child safety. Give us your feedback!*



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