

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

I founded the nonprofit KlaasKids Foundation (www.klaaskids.org and www.klaaskidsespanol.org) in 1994 to give meaning to Polly's death by pursuing an aggressive social and legislative child safety platform. With more than thirteen years of relentless advocacy on behalf of missing, abused and at-risk children, the KlaasKids Foundation has established itself as an important agent of change. Our holistic kitchen table to the president's cabinet table approach has, among other important accomplishments, provided hundreds of thousands of families with significant child safety resources, including free DNA collection kits.

However, I realized that Polly's legacy would not be complete until the time gap between a child's abduction (the crime) and the dissemination of critical information to the public was reduced significantly. Knowing from bitter personal experience that a kidnapper can disappear at an average of a mile per minute without drawing undue attention, I waited in vain for larger and better funded organizations to resolve this time-critical issue. When this did not happen, I took matters into my own hands and leveraged California's high-tech environment to create a cost-effective and efficient high speed solution.

In 2001, once the solution was achieved, I founded the 501(c) (3) public benefit non-profit corporation BeyondMissing, Inc.

BeyondMissing hosts a secure password-protected website that allows law enforcement to quickly create and distribute English and/or Spanish language missing child flyers. Without getting too technical, BeyondMissing provided America's Law Enforcement community with the ability to create and distribute graphic and text data to public and private entities by fax and email in a matter of minutes, without the need to acquire new hardware or software. Additional flyer services were added (the Parent Flyer Tool that allows a parent to create English/Spanish flyers, receive alerts via text message).

Congress understood the goals of BeyondMissing and since November 2001 has supported our technology through earmark funding.

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CYBER CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN



Cyber crime against children represents a criminal phenomenon unique to the 21st Century. The days of monitoring your kid's on-line activity by putting the home computer in the living room are long past, because cell phones, PDA's, wireless laptops, and libraries all offer easy Internet access. This is why

the KlaasKids Foundation has introduced a comprehensive new Cyber Crimes section to our website.

By the mid-1980s perpetrators were isolated and fearful as the production and distribution of child pornography in the USA had been nearly eradicated.

Unfortunately, cyber-pedophiles have successfully reinvigorated the near-dormant child pornography industry by using the Internet to make the production and distribution of kiddy-porn easy and in-expensive. They empower amoral behavior by networking and sharing files with each other. The problem is epidemic.

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Cyber Predators

Children used to beware predators lurking in alleys, dark stairwells, in and around parks and schoolyards. While those concerns still exist, a series of legislative efforts has at last made it much more difficult to be a successful pedophile in the U.S.

The exception is the Internet, which has emboldened a new generation of cyber-perverts who rely upon anonymity and subterfuge to engage their evil intentions. This small subset lurks behind false profiles as they attempt to lure, groom, and victimize our children. The very predators who cannot penetrate our dead bolts, alarm systems, guard dogs or personal armories have found a back alley into our living rooms using binary code and new world technology.

To understand how quickly the pervert nation has turned the tables a brief overview of the Internet is in order. In 1986, the US National Science Foundation initiated the development of the NSFNET which today provides a major communications backbone service for the Internet. The World Wide Web came into general use in 1992. Mosaic X, the first graphical user interface was introduced in 1993, shortly before Polly was kidnapped. In 1996 Congress passed the US Communications Decency Act in order to prohibit distribution of indecent materials over the Internet. In 1997 the US Supreme Court unanimously ruled most of US Communications Decency Act unconstitutional.

The problem has become so alarming that an instant message stating that, "I am a twelve-year-old-boy home alone and I want to have sex with you," is enough to deploy a convoy of pedophiles willing to risk everything to satisfy uncontrollable urges. The problem has become so alarming that the founder and

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chairman of the US House of Representatives Missing and Exploited Children’s Caucus confidently engaged his own high stakes Internet lure for more than a decade under our very noses. The problem has become so alarming that while we basked in a false sense of security the family living room became the predator’s new playground.

Networking

The single characteristic, besides intent, that differentiates child predators from the rest of us is aggression. While we have stood around in benign ignorance they have engaged an aggressive campaign of mayhem and crime against our children. If we hope to stop the victimization we will have to become as aggressive and organized in our efforts as they have been in theirs. We must network, share resources, be creative and demonstrate will and determination.

There is no silver bullet that will end cyber crimes against children. Legislation is at best a

partial solution, and by itself technology cannot contain evil intention. Law enforcement decoy stings will never eradicate the black heart of a predator. Education and awareness, in the classroom or at home, will only go so far toward protecting kids, because kids are vulnerable by nature of who they are. With few exceptions, Internet Service Providers and Social Networking sites will not even be a component of the solution until they acknowledge responsibility for the content that flows freely through their portals and willingly do something to eradicate the dangers that lurk within.

The Internet is here to stay. It affords tremendous benefits and enables monumental abuses. If we are going to ensure that the World Wide Web does not become a virtual Wild Wild West, we have to aggressively engage those who would abuse it. But, by linking arms and working toward a common goal, we can ensure that our kids online experience is positive and safe. ■

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Legislatively we have come a long way since Polly was kidnapped. In 1993, the average convicted child molester spent only 2.2 years in prison, and it seemed as if recidivist violent offenders were serving life sentences on the installment plan, spinning through a turnstile system of justice in which their crimes became bolder and more predatory. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 invested billions of dollars into states that adopted truth in sentencing, prevention programs for at risk youth and putting 100,000 police on the streets of America. In 1993 only two states had provisions for community notification of sex offenders. By 1996, Megan's Law had forced the states to register sexual felons and provide some form of community notification. In those days kidnappings were investigated quietly. The media and the public were completely

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excluded from participating in the recovery effort. The Protect Act of 2003 introduced the Amber Alert as national policy. All of this legislation is well intentioned, yet flawed. Because the individual states control the vast majority of criminal justice, legislation policy remains inconsistent and uncoordinated. As many as 25 percent of registered sex offenders do not comply with current law. The Adam Walsh Children's Safety and Protection Act should change all of that by forcing the states to work together toward a synchronized national strategy. By providing bonus payments to states that comply with the Adam Walsh Act sooner than its three-year timeline, and penalizing states that do not comply by

reducing federal crime fighting funds, we might finally integrate sentencing, sex offender management and an Internet-based national sex offender registry.

Sex Offender Registry

The Adam Walsh Act fully integrates Megan's Law and creates the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website. This will provide one Website from which citizens can access all of the 560,000 convicted sex offenders under the care, custody or control of corrections agencies in the United States. It expands sex offenders to include juvenile sex offenders; and requires States to notify each other when sex offender moves from one State to another. It further adds the "Use of the Internet to facilitate or commit a crime against a minor," as a crime that could trigger registration.

Sentencing

One of the most important objectives of the Adam Walsh Act focuses on criminal sentencing. A public outraged that Jessica Lunsford could be sexually abused and then buried alive by an anonymous pervert living next door triggered massive sentencing reform. The death sentence or life without parole will be standard if a sex crime against a child results in their death. If the crime is kidnapping, aggravated sexual abuse, sexual abuse, maiming or results in serious bodily injury, the offender will receive a sentence of 30 years to life. The bottom line is simple. The door revolves no more if you are convicted of committing a sex crime against a child.

The civil commitment clause of the Adam Walsh Act requires state prisons to notify states attorneys when predators are about to be released. State attorneys can then petition the court for continued confinement if that predator is considered a continuing threat to public safety. Failing to register or update registry information will carry a

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penalty of 5 to 20 years in prison. Compliance includes registration prior to release from prison or supervised release. Sex offenders will be required to re-register in person twice a year: sexually violent predators will be required to re-register every three months. Any change of status requiring a registry update must be made three-business days after the change occurs. The act further improves verification systems by requiring monthly verification, in-person verification every six months, and regular notarized verification mailings. First-time sex offenders will be required to register for at

least 20 years: twice convicted offenders and sexually violent offenders for their lifetime.

There is no silver bullet that will eradicate crimes against children. This issue has been with us throughout our history and will continue to plague us as we move forward. However, if we continue to evolve rather than deny the issues surrounding crimes against children we can prevent future tragedies against innocent victims. And, we may finally reach an important plateau. Instead of predators representing our worst nightmare, we may begin to represent their worst nightmare. ■

A MESSAGE FROM MARC

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Unfortunately, due to recent legislation and Congressional agreements on earmark reform, the future of BeyondMissing is in jeopardy. While I understand Congress' need to control pork barrel projects, I am deeply troubled at the prospect of not being able to continue offering our irreplaceable flyer program.

I am a dedicated child safety advocate. There is only one way that we can continue to save the lives of missing children and that is by requesting and accepting your financial support. We need your support until the 2008 funding opportunities are realized. ■

PLEASE HELP BEYONDMISSING, INC. ACHIEVE OUR GOALS!

You can send a check payable to:

BeyondMissing, Inc.

P.O. Box 1185

Sausalito, CA 94966-1185

or visit www.beyondmissing.com and click on "Donate".

We will be accepting credit card donations.

Please call the office at (415) 461-3463

or email info@beyondmissing.com if you would like additional information.

Thank you for considering our request
and please pass it on to other interested parties who would like to help

Thank you for your contribution and support!



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