

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

The KlaasKids Foundation has engaged in collaborative relationships throughout our history. The ability to develop, maintain, and strengthen partnerships with outside entities in order to achieve a shared vision or other common objectives represents an important strategy for non-profit organizations. Goals that appear unattainable can often times be accomplished by combining resources, contacts or other factors.

KlaasKids was born out of chaos and necessity within a year of Polly's death. Violet and I founded the KlaasKids Foundation with just \$2,000, half of which was donated by actor Peter Coyote. With the other half coming from our own personal funds, we immediately reached out to create the partnership that would help KlaasKids move forward.

As a result, KlaasKids has reached out to political and media contacts initially established in the aftermath of Polly's October 1993 abduction. We pursued our mission of stopping crimes against children by working with federal and state legislators from both

sides of the aisle to create and implement an important and effective body of child safety legislation. We accepted every media opportunity to discuss our legislative efforts and explain our determination that others should be spared our tragic circumstances. Those inaugural collaborations made future opportunities possible.

Leveraging Collaborative Relationships

One of our major projects is the Print-A-Thon designed as an inclusive program that provides the same level of service to a poor family from the trailer park as it does to a wealthy family from Park Avenue. Its success is dependent upon community-minded sponsors who underwrite the entire effort so that it can be offered to the community at no

(Continued on Next Page)

INSIDE

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS	PAGE 1
HUMAN TRAFFICKING.....	PAGE 4
A GIFT FROM THE HEART	PAGE 5

cost. At the typical Print-A-Thon, children are digitally fingerprinted and photographed. They then receive a bio-document that also includes pro-active, non-threatening child safety tips, a nine-point plan on what to do in case your child disappears and a "Do It Yourself" DNA collection kit. KlaasKids does not database personal or private information.

Through the years we have worked closely with national partners like **HSBC Credit Centers**, **hhGregg Appliance and Electronics**, and **First Alert Security**, **Court TV**, and **Safeway Stores**. Important local partners like the **Dave Mungenast Automotive Family** in St. Louis, MO, and the **Billion Automotive** in Sioux Falls, SD, have also enabled KlaasKids to bring the grassroots Print-A-Thon to more than 40 states and provided us with opportunities to

interact with more than one million children and their families.

The Print-A-Thon has allowed us to participate in many win/win relationships that have benefited the Foundation and our partners.

However, KlaasKids holistic approach to child safety has enabled us to pursue other types of collaborations as well. Partnerships with other non-profit organizations such as **Stop Child Predators**, the **Jessica Lunsford Foundation**, the **Joyful Child** and **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** have resulted in

back-end (sentencing) and front-end (prevention) state and federal laws that have benefited all of America's children. Formal and informal partnerships with organizations like the **Laura Recovery Center**, the **Carole Sund Foundation**, the **Interstate Association for Stolen Children**, **Grief Haven**, and the **Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking** have provided numerous families and victims with services that they otherwise would not have received.



Surviving Parents Coalition Receiving Heroes Among Us Award

Within the past year we have also entered into a very ambitious relationship with the families of other kidnapped children and the organizations born of those tragedies. The **Surviving Parents Coalition**, a child protection lobbying group, was cobbled together by Erin Runnion, the mother of Samantha Runnion.

(Continued on Page 3)

© 2007 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. Design Concept: Blackburn Design, Petaluma, CA. Printing: MSI Litho, San Rafael, CA.

To date, the Surviving Parents Coalition has appeared in *People Magazine* twice and been honored as a recipient of the *People Magazine* 2007 Heroes Among Us Award.

An informal relationship that we entered into with the California DNA Laboratory in 2000 resulted in the first “Do It Yourself” DNA collection kit. Prior to that time private firms were charging between \$5 to \$200 dollars for a similar product. We have conducted law enforcement trainings with the Jessica Lunsford and Joyful Child Foundations on lessons learned during various kidnap cases.

This is not to say that there have not been obstacles and disappointment along the way. The September 11, 2001, tragedy threatened the very existence of the KlaasKids Foundation as it did so many other non-profit organizations. Appropriately, all philanthropy was directed toward Twin Towers disaster relief but, it left many medium to small non-profits struggling to survive. KlaasKids used this time to update our website and load it with our accumulated knowledge base. The result has been very satisfying and would not have been possible without the collaboration of Don Barnes at **Cellar Ideas** and Greg Hyde at **Assimilated Multimedia**. Both of these fine organizations continue to be important partners of the KlaasKids Foundation.

Fire Hydrant Syndrome

Almost all of the federal funding for missing children’s advocacy currently flows to two organizations: the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, or NCMEC (which focuses largely on the legal aspects of abduction) and the Fox Valley Technical College (which provides technical assistance for law enforcement). However, there is no regular



Ahmad Rivazfar, Sharon Brooks, Marc Klaas, Linda Walker, Milka Moulton, Colleen Nick, Rebecca DeMauro and Ed Smart

federal assistance for those organizations working on the front lines to directly help the families of abductees and the victims of abduction.

This is why private donations are especially important to groups like ours. As well as the many programs we have already discussed, the KlaasKids Foundation initiated the electronic distribution of missing child flyers, which is now standard practice around the nation, and led the call for the legislation which set up the National Amber Alert system, which has already been responsible for saving the lives of hundreds of children. With leading-edge concepts like these, we plan to continue to work toward creating mutually beneficial partnerships with NCMEC and Fox, hoping to provide our extensive ground-zero experience to help support legislation and law enforcement in this area.

Finally, I must celebrate the most successful collaboration of all, one which I became aware only after many years of reflection. By 1993, the San Francisco Bay Area had faced a decade-long string of unsolved predatory abductions.

(Continued on Page 5)

THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The children of middle class America are too often victims of human sex trafficking.

- In the United States 1.6 to 2.8 million children run away annually;
- Half of all runaways are girls;
- Within 48 hours of hitting the streets, one-third of these children are lured or recruited into the underground world of prostitution or pornography;
- Per U.S. law, any person who has not attained 18 years of age and is induced into performing a commercial sex act is a victim of human sex trafficking;
- Not enough is being done to help these young victims.

Shauna's Story

Shauna was a white, middle class, 17-year-old high school student from Pensacola, FL who made friends easily and was popular with her peers. When the new girl at school invited her for a sleep-over, she said "sure." But when Shauna got to the house and asked for a glass of water her world turned upside down. She was given a date rape drug. She passed out. Her new friend was a recruiter and the man she called dad was a human trafficker.

When Shauna woke up, her hands were tied above her head, her legs were being held, and she was being gang raped. She begged them to stop, so they beat her. Finally, she gave up the fight and prayed that she would live through the ordeal. The trafficker was preparing her for sale, to an unnamed individual for \$300,000.

KlaasKids Search & Rescue Director Brad Dennis worked with local law enforcement to put the heat on Shauna's traffickers. In response, the traffickers dropped her in a parking lot, nearly dead. Shauna credits Brad for saving her life. She is now 18 years old, has a baby, a job, a steady

boyfriend, and is slowly putting her life back together.

Crystal's Story

Crystal is a poor black 12 year-old girl from a troubled family in Dallas, TX. Her life at home is problematic at best. Her mom is a drug addict and prostitute and her father is often in jail. Stability and tranquility are foreign concepts to Crystal. Therefore, she runs away. She takes to the streets and allows pimps to prostitute her.

Her family may be dysfunctional, but they do love her. They reported her missing to law enforcement. This is how Crystal came to the attention of KlaasKids. On Labor Day 2007, Tim Nowell of KlaasKids traveled to Dallas and with the help of a local missing person's organization and a concerned aunt, recovered and returned Crystal to her family.

Local law enforcement discounted Crystal's account of being trafficked. Tim arranged for her to be seen at a local ER, and advocated for law enforcement to file reports that would make her eligible for counseling. Crystal lives in a cycle of abuse and unfortunately, it was not long before she took to the streets, and was again under the control of a pimp.

KlaasKids was informed that Crystal had again run away so a different recovery approach was affected. A social worker by trade, Stacy Nowell sought assistance in the non-profit sector and secured a coveted bed at the **Children of the Night** shelter in Los Angeles. One of only two locations in the United States that houses domestic victims of human trafficking, Children of the Night is willing to house Crystal until she is 18 years old. Without KlaasKids intervention, it is very likely that Crystal would not have lived to see her eighteenth birthday. ■

(Continued from Page 3)

Millions of local citizens, including my family, watched as tearful parents pleaded with psychopathic criminals to return their children to no avail. When faced with that exact circumstance, my family and I had to make a simple yet seemingly impossible choice. We had to keep Polly's story alive until a resolution was reached, however optimistic or pessimistic that resolution would turn out to be.

So we worked with the police, the media, the volunteers, and the public through the 65 most difficult days that we will ever endure. It was contentious and difficult. It was fueled by fear as we raced against an ever running clock. Ultimately it was heartbreaking, for our wishes were fulfilled, but not as we had hoped. And in the end a sort of justice was served. The killer was sentenced to death, purpose was given to my life, and Polly's soul was at rest. ■



Elliott Groves & Polly Klaas in Carmel, CA ~ 1985

A GIFT FROM THE HEART

Seven-year-old Aaron from Woodland Hills, CA orchestrated a gift giving program and donated \$400 to KlaasKids in 2007. In lieu of receiving birthday gifts, Aaron requested that family and friends make contributions to KlaasKids so that all children could benefit from his good fortune. This is the gift giving season.

When KlaasKids began 13 years ago there were very few resources for families like mine. Law enforcement did not have protocols, legislation supported offenders and disregarded victims, media was indifferent to the plight of children, and there were very few organizations in a position to provide assistance. In other words, desperate families were left to their own devices.

Now, however, things have changed dramatically. Law enforcement has no problem activating the Amber Alert in appropriate situations. The FBI has special agents that are trained in the recovery of kidnapped children. More viable child safety legislation has been passed in the past 14 years than in our entire previous history. The media regularly highlights the plight of missing children and there are many organizations that can assist the families of the missing. Most importantly of all, however, society is better informed and educated about child safety than ever before. The KlaasKids Foundation has been in the forefront of all of these battles.

Donate by credit card on-line for immediate processing of your contribution, or send us a check before the end of the year.

It is time to maximize your tax benefits and contribute to the social welfare of America's children by making a year end donation to the non-profit tax exempt charity of your choice. Please give to KlaasKids Foundation. ■

JOIN THE FOUNDATION AND HELP FIGHT CRIME!

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

Credit Card Number: _____

Exp. Date _____ Amount: \$ _____

Discover Card

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Thank you for your contribution and support!



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