

KLAAS ACTION REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARC KLAAS FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

A MESSAGE FROM MARC

*O*n January 23, 1999, the memorial service was held for 13-year-old Christina Williams, who was kidnapped and later found dead near Monterey, California. Marc Klaas was asked to speak, and gave the following message to those who attended.

The hand of God touches us on the day our children are born. When we first hold them in our arms, we experience the power of unconditional love. We vow to love and protect them forever. For one brief moment in time, all is perfect as we stand atop the mountain and the sun rises and spreads warmth over our souls. This is the miracle of birth.

Children bless us with companionship on this earthly pilgrimage. Their innocence enhances our understanding. The purity of their love expands our horizons. Their eyes provide us with clarity of vision and enhance the depth of our emotion. They take us to the summit so we can experience the value of love and the essence of being.

Last June 12 the angels dipped their wings over the Monterey Peninsula and reclaimed one of their own. In life, Christina touched those who knew her, but in death she moved us all. The well-being of a little lost girl transcended religious, ethnic, and political barriers. Millions of searching eyes and millions of hands clasped in prayer for her safe return set a course that

eons of evolution, thousands of years of legislation, and hundreds of years of struggle could not accomplish. She brought us together as one. You were Christina's angels.

For seven long months, you helped Christina's family navigate the murky waters of despair toward a fate that tantalized us all with glimmers of light, then veiled our hopes in darkness. Finally the prayers of Christina's angels were answered, but not as we expected.

As the angels dipped their wings, another powerful force reached up from the depths and shattered lives. We know it exists, yet we dread it and are loath to acknowledge it. We excuse and justify it even as it erodes our society. We attempt to deny it yet it denies us not. We pity its victims, yet offer no solutions for its cause. Our failure to acknowledge its reality guarantees its future as we hurtle over the abyss into the valley of despair. Evil is the face on the other side of the

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REMEMBERING DR. CHRIS HATCHER (1946–1999)

By Marc Klaas

Two weeks after Polly's kidnapping and overwhelmed by chaotic events beyond my control, I had just concluded a briefing on the status of Polly's case and as usual there were no new developments. I was leaving the Petaluma Police Department, feeling as I could hardly maintain my sanity, when an elegant man in an Armani suit introduced himself as Dr. Chris Hatcher, clinical professor of psychology from UCSF. Thus began

an ongoing therapeutic journey of healing and personal growth.

As an acknowledged expert in hostage negotiation ... predatory child kidnapping, threat assessment, and violent behavior, Chris Hatcher's influence has been extensive and profound.

Dr. Hatcher gave me several phone numbers and placed himself at my disposal. As weeks dragged into months, I often called Dr. Hatcher for advice and consultations. He was always available, returning my pages within a few moments. No question was too small, no query insignificant. He helped me to focus on the task at

hand and in his quiet, professional manner helped prepare me for a fate I was unwilling to accept. Although I barely knew him, Chris Hatcher became indispensable in my quest for resolution. He treated my wife, Violet, and I with dignity and respect, displaying an empathy that seemed impossible for an outsider.

Polly Becomes America's Child

As the intensity escalated in the search for Polly, certain law enforcement representatives blurred lines of responsibility by engaging in social work. Chris interceded and ensured that frustrations created by a lack of progress never betrayed our common goal of finding Polly. His judgment was always sound, his intentions clear. Trips to the Petaluma Police Department were much easier to bear whenever Chris' Corvette was parked in their lot.

Unlike fairy tales, things do not always end happily ever after, even



Dr. Chris Hatcher

when you do get what you want. As we approached resolution, Chris introduced me to a kidnap recovery program that he had developed. At best, Polly would be traumatized beyond imagination, were she still alive, and the entire family would need intensive therapy.

But, alas, the news we received was the worst. Chris suggested that we designate Polly as America's Child, a symbolic gesture that allowed people to emotionally invest in the important issue of child kidnapping. In the weeks following Polly's death, Chris became my big brother, guiding and maneuvering Violet and I through our grief. Chris was our lifeline in a sea of fury and rage.

Understanding the Mind of the Victim

I had not spoken to Chris for over a year when I learned that he died suddenly on Saturday, February 20, at his home in Ramona, California at 52 years of age. At his memorial service at San Francisco's Fort Mason Conference Center, I learned that Chris extended his healing powers and brilliantly creative mind into many arenas. As an acknowledged expert in hostage negotiation, workplace violence, cults, predatory child kidnapping, threat assessment, and violent behavior, Chris Hatcher's influence has been extensive and profound. His overall contribution to the understanding of the mind and fragility of victims cannot be overestimated and will never be fully appreciated.

Chris Hatcher accomplished what we all aspire to. He left the world a better place than he found it. ■

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UPCOMING LEGISLATION REDEFINES CHILD CRIMES

The KlaasKids Foundation is supporting a number of bills which will help make the U.S. safer for our children. Their scope ranges from requiring states to accept fiscal responsibility for released prisoners to redefining some current laws and standards. We urge our readers to contact their state and federal representatives to help guarantee safe passage of the following legislation:

- The federal Aimee’s law: This bipartisan legislation, to be debated in the current sessions of both the Senate (SB 668: Senator Rick Santorum) and the House of Representatives (HB 894: Representative Matt Salmon), would require a state to assume fiscal responsibility if it releases a murderer, rapist, or child molester who then goes on to commit one of those crimes in another state. The state that released the convict would be required to compensate the second state as well as the victim of the later crime.

In California, a number of bills are coming up for consideration:

- SB 6 (Senator Rainey, R-Contra Costa): Would raise the age limit for triggering “be on the lookout” police bulletins from 12 to 16 years of age. Also requires that police bulletins be issued whenever someone reports a missing person of any age, if there is a reasonable belief that the missing person is “at risk.”

- AB 672 (Assemblywoman Sally Havice, 56th District): Revise the definition of “violent felony” to include kidnapping of both adults and children.

- AB 415 (Assemblywoman Sally Havice, 56th District): Mandates

criminal background checks of fingerprints, through the U.S. Department of Justice, on school volunteers who may be given unsupervised access to children.

- AB 1390 (Assemblywoman Sally Havice, 56th District): Recommends the expulsion of students who are confirmed to have committed a third violent offense, with the intent of curbing and preventing escalation of violence in schools. The pupil may not return to any school until they have been through a counseling program designed to prevent youth violence and crime. ■

TV SPECIAL FOCUS ON CRIME CAUSES

Marc Klaas will host a one-hour CBS special called *Criminal Confessions* that provides a behind-the-scenes look into the inner workings of the criminal mind. Using never-before-seen interrogations and videotaped confessions, experts examine the puzzling reasons and often disturbing realities behind these crimes. Expert testimony reveals the hidden dark side of human nature and gives us an awareness of what causes a person to cross the line into a secretive world of defiance and mayhem. The airing date is yet to be scheduled, so watch your local listings. ■

UPCOMING CHILD SAFETY DAY EVENTS

April 3, Adams Jeep, Aberdeen, MD
 April 9–10, Diehl Ford, Bellingham, WA
 April 9–10, Victory Ford Lincoln Mercury, Lagrange, GA
 April 10–11, Don Bohn Ford, Harvey, LA
 April 16, WFMS Radio, Indianapolis, IN
 April 16–17–18, Patriot Pontiac, Kileen, TX
 April 17–18, Atlantic Star Broadcasting, Hartford, CT
 April 23–24, Noller Lincoln Mercury, Topeka, KS
 April 24, Sundance Dodge, Boise, ID
 April 24–25, WKLME Radio/Chancellor Mkt, Phoenix, AZ

May 5–6, Northside Ford, San Antonio, TX
 May 7–8, Lawson Auto Plex, Lawton, OK
 May 8, Autohaus VW, Harrisburg, PA
 May 12–13, Beardmore, Omaha, NE
 May 15–16, Comcast Cable, Florence, AL
 May 15–16, Comcast Cable, Huntsville, AL
 May 21–22, O’Neill Honda, Overland Park, KS
 May 22–23, Comcast Cable, Tuscaloosa, AL
 May 22–23, Comcast Cable, Meridian, MS
 May 22–23, Perry Lincoln Mercury, Santa Barbara, CA
 May 22–23, KISS-FM, San Francisco, CA
 May 29–30, Comcast Cable, Gadsden, AL

June 5, Amber Day/Amber Swartz, Pinole, CA
 June 5, Alan Jay Automotive Group, Sebring, FL
 June 5–6, Comcast Cable, Tupelo, MS

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN IN THE MODERN WORLD

By Sam Farr, Representative, California

There's an old saying about there being "a special God for children." Certainly we'd like to think that someone's watching over our young people, protecting them from harm. But the truth is that there are also many dangers that kids face.

As parents and decent citizens, we all are duty-bound to shield children from those dangers. Certainly as a nation, we are obligated to provide the safest world possible for our children to grow up in. As a father myself, I tremble to think of the trauma that America's missing children are enduring.

The Christina Williams Case

Unfortunately, I learned an example of this horror in my own community. I represent the Central Coast of California, a beautiful region of the country that is home to many wonderful child advocates and children's programs. It was also home to a 13-year-old girl named Christina Williams.

Christina disappeared while walking the family dog on June 12, 1998.

The Williams family and the local community reacted immediately with an unprecedented volunteer effort, collaborating with local law enforcement and media, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and many other generous sources of assistance in an attempt to return Christina safely home.

Seven months of searching and waiting came to a tragic end in every parent's worst nightmare on January 12, 1999. A body discovered three miles from the Williams' family home was formally identified as Christina's two days later.

The day Christina Williams' body was found was one of the darkest I've seen on the Central Coast. Christina's family and friends said goodbye, and vowed never to forget their daughter, sister, and friend. As a community, we had to learn to turn our anger and pain into a mission

to make our country a safe place to raise loved, secure children.

Putting Government to Work for Children

As an elected official, I knew that I had to act as well. I joined the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus (CMECC) because I know that by working with other members of Con-

gress who represent districts all over the country, we can pool our resources, exchange ideas, and bring greater awareness to the risks facing our children.

The Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus is nearly 100 representatives strong. It is essential that our nation's children have a voice in our federal legislature. Our goal is to introduce legislation that would help law enforcement agencies, communities, and schools to address child abduction. We take home to our respective areas the tools parents need to help keep their children safe.

The CMECC is working to coordinate community, state, and national efforts to combat the growth of child exploitation and abduction throughout the country. Among other programs, we are focusing on publicizing missing children more effectively, and we are running workshops for professionals who deal with children in abuse and abduction cases, including law enforcement who set up response plans and handle investigations.

Childhood should be an innocent time of growth and learning. It should not be an obstacle course of unimaginable evil lurking around every corner. I salute the KlaasKids Foundation and its supporters for its work on behalf of our country's young people. I am proud to stand with you, and I hope to be of service.

For information about the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, contact Abby Hochberg in Congressman Nick Lampson's office at (202) 225-6565, or visit their website at <http://www.house.gov/cramer/cmekc.htm>. ■



California Representative
Sam Farr

The CMECC are coordinating community, state, and national efforts to combat the growth of child exploitation and abduction throughout the country.

PROJECT HOPE HELPS FAMILIES OF KIDNAPPED CHILDREN

The United States Justice Department, through its Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), has for the first time funded the development of a support network for families of missing children. Project HOPE (Help Offering Parents Empowerment) is designed to fill a services gap by supplementing law enforcement and other professional agency services, providing a vital lifeline to families of missing children.

The purpose of the national project is to connect requesting agencies and families with a trained parent volunteer to assist with the needs of the family in crisis. All volunteers of the project have had or still have a

All volunteers of the project have had or still have a missing child as the result of family or non-family abductions, international abductions, and runaways.

missing child as the result of family and non-family abductions, international abductions, and runaways. By offering the support of another person who has had similar experiences, Project HOPE strives to create a much needed resource to compassionately assist those passing through this traumatic time.

“No parent should be alone when his or her child is kidnapped,” said Michael Medaris, program manager at OJJDP. “We wanted to develop a program that would take advantage of the vast, disparate knowledge accumulated by parents all over the country. We are very impressed with the dedication of the parents who volunteer for Project HOPE, and think that we have the core of a program that will be sustained for years to come.”

Project HOPE is administered by Public Administration Service (PAS), a not-for-profit organization, based in McLean, Virginia. The Project operates under the direction of Ms. Michelle C. Jezycki, Project Director, with the assistance of Project Coordinator, Ms. Patty Wetterling, mother of Jacob Wetterling, missing since October 1989.

“Since Jacob’s case was the only one of its kind in Minnesota, the only opportunity I ever had to meet other parents with shared experiences was on television programs,” said Wetterling. “I always found those to be

empowering meetings, that provided a way to brainstorm and find out how other parents cope with personal issues surrounding their missing children.

“This got me to thinking that there might be a more efficient way for parents to network. I believe that Project Hope will enable us as an organization to make a more powerful presentation of the problem than we could ever hope to accomplish alone. We empower each other to do a better job of fighting for America’s children. We are not just a bunch of sad, angry people sitting around lamenting our fate,” Wetterling said.

“Many of us have been counseling the parents of kidnapped children for years,” added Marc Klaas. “Project HOPE gives us the ability to better develop our skills to effectively assist those in need. It immediately became apparent that our accumulated knowledge far surpasses our individual abilities.”

The following are active, trained Parent Volunteers for Project HOPE:

- Colene and James Arnold (Family Abduction, Ely, NV)
- Beverly Callahan (Family Abduction, Lake Stevens, WA)
- Erin Kelly (Family Abduction, Everett, WA)
- Violaine Delahais (International Abduction, Mesa, AZ)
- Ian Fulcher (International Abduction, College Park, MD)
- Laurell Hall (Non-Family Abduction, Pine Bluff, AR)
- Willie Hall (Non-Family Abduction, Pine Bluff, AR)
- Marc Klaas (Non-Family Abduction, Sausalito, CA)
- Valerie Lever (Runaway, West Columbia, SC)
- Colleen Nick (Non-Family Abduction, Alma, AR)
- Abby Potash (Family Abduction, Hamburg, NJ)
- JoAnn Rock (Non-Family Abduction, Millbrae, CA)
- Angie and Richard Ross (Family Abduction, El Dorado, AR)
- Claudine and Donald Ryce (Non-Family Abduction, Miami, FL)
- Steven Slinkard (Family Abduction, Indianapolis, IN)
- Gwen Temperton-Vatcher, (Non-Family Abduction, Montreal, Canada)
- Susan Wilmer (Non-Family Abduction, Baldwin, NY)

To access Project HOPE services and make a referral, please call 1-800-306-6311. For more information about the Project, call Michelle Jezycki at (703) 734-8970 ext. 3013. ■

ABDUCTED GIRL'S RETURN CREDITED TO AMBER PLAN

The message that played over the car radio seeking help in the kidnapping of eight-year-old Bianca Nino had a chilling effect on the man who had her in the front seat of his car, the young girl said.

Kidnapper Ignacio Rios, who had once dated Bianca's aunt, quickly returned to the West Grand Prairie motel where he was staying, and where a friend of Bianca's family later found her unharmed.

The broadcast warning was the result of the program known as the Amber Plan, created in December 1996. The plan is an agreement between area police departments and more than 25 metroplex radio stations that allows investigators to quickly spread the word to hundreds of thousands of North Texas motorists, many of whom have mobile phones. The hope is that the motorists will call police if they see suspects matching the description.

After some early growing pains, the plan has emerged as an important tool for police investigating child abductions, police officials said. Arlington police successfully used the plan in November after a baby-sitter abducted an infant, police said. Within 15 minutes of the broadcast, a motorist spotted the woman's pickup and called police.

"We felt there was a good possibility that the child was still out there, and the more time passed, the more dangerous it would be," Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson said.

But police officials said they are careful not to overuse the Amber Plan. Before sounding the alarm, investigators evaluate the

circumstances of a missing child report before activating the alarm. Arlington police have seriously considered using the plan four times since it was implemented in December 1996 but have activated it only once. Bianca's kidnapping marked the first time that Grand Prairie police used the broadcast warning system.

The plan was created after the January 1996 abduction and slaying of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman of Arlington. The guidelines state that it should be used only in cases where a confirmed abduction by a stranger has occurred, but Police Chief David Kunkle said investigators have expanded that interpretation and will use it in any cases where they determine it could be useful.

"I think the definition we use is more appropriate," Kunkle said. "Just because it's a family kidnapping does not mean the child's not in danger." In any case, restraint is important because using the Amber Plan too frequently could desensitize residents to the importance of the alarm, Anderson said. "We don't want to get to the point that they're so routine that people ignore them."

Ruben Rodriguez, Sr., a senior analyst at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, praised the plan because it helps officers in the earliest and most important stage of an investigation. Studies have shown that children are often harmed in the first three hours of an abduction, he said.

"It's imperative that law enforcement get the word out, and you use any kind of medium to do that," Rodriguez said.

The plan received nationwide attention after Arlington police successfully used it in November. Anderson said that since then, he has received many inquiries from other agencies about how to set up similar plans. He said he is not aware of any other areas using such a system.

"It will be interesting to see as time goes on whether other areas adopt it," he said. ■

This article appeared originally in the Arlington, TX Star-Telegram (January 12, 1999), and is by staff writer Robert Tharp. Reprinted by permission.

MEGAN'S LAW UPHELD AGAIN

The Federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals has rejected the latest in a line of constitutional challenges to New Jersey's Megan's Law. Convicted sex offenders required to register for community notification under the law complained that distributing personal information about them to police and neighborhood groups violates their privacy.

The court rejected this argument, holding that an offender's sex crime conviction record is not protected by a right of privacy, and that any privacy right in other personal information is outweighed by the state's compelling interest in letting the public know where sex offenders live so that steps can be taken to protect children from sexual assault.

Megan's Law statutes have also been upheld by the Second and Ninth Circuit appeals courts, and the Supreme Court has declined to review the decisions. ■

SENTRYKIDS SOFTWARE EASES CHILD FINGERPRINTING PROCESS

SentryKIDS™ is a new and exciting software program that allows communities to economically fingerprint and photograph children without using ink or film. It was developed by Robert Waryga, the owner and chief executive officer of Sentry Technology (located in Chester County, Pennsylvania) and the father of three teenaged children.

Following a successful eleven-year career with Xerox, in 1987 Robert founded Sentry Technology, a fully integrated security company specializing in designing, installing, and servicing security systems for the commercial market. Its customers include Unisys, CIGNA Insurance, Scott Paper, Mellon Bank, American Bank Note Company and various Philadelphia area hospital networks.

While he was working with the U.S. Secret Service on an unrelated project, forensic experts noted to Waryga that they needed a way to fulfill their mandate to assist in the search for missing children. As a single parent, Robert was motivated to take a close look at how he could use technology to help protect children from victimization. He applied his technical experience in the electronic imaging field to develop the SentryKIDS child ID system. Designed so that a useful set of fingerprints can be obtained from even a very young child, SentryKIDS provides images with a forensic quality traditionally reserved for the criminal element of our society.

“Conventional ID programs use ink that is designed to fingerprint adults and does not take into consideration the tiny ridges on the delicate fingertips of children and

infants,” Waryga said. “The Sentry-KIDS system creates a print quality of print that is superior to that which can be achieved with ink, since there are provisions to enlarge and edit the fingerprints. And the operator does not have to know anything about fingerprinting to get professional results every time.”

During the past two years, the KlaasKids Foundation has fingerprinted and photographed more than 100,000 of America’s children with the Sentry KIDS system. The process is so simple that children as young as 12 can become excellent operators. The child being fingerprinted simply places his or her finger on the electronic scanner, and the operator uses a computer mouse to point to the appropriate box for that fingerprint on a computer screen and clicks. Likewise, the operator takes a photograph by simply pointing and clicking. The computer spools the information into a standard laser printer and one minute later you have a finished product. No ink, no film, no mess!

Given the option, the KlaasKids Foundation and the Secret Service do not database the information, leaving identifying information form fields blank for parents to complete at home. This way the portable Sentry-KIDS units will not divulge privacy information if stolen or lost. Should parents ever be faced with a missing child, the completed 8 1/2” x 11” Bio-document provides law enforcement with important and detailed information that will aid their investigations.

SentryKIDS units are priced at \$6,995 if you use your own computer,

printer, and video camera, and is certainly within the budget of every community. Sentry Technology, Inc., dedicated to the protection of children and family safety is located at 741 Saginaw Road, Oxford, PA 19363, or call toll free 1 888-926-KIDS. ■

MESSAGE FROM MARC

(CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

mirror and it mocks us and makes us turn away in fear.

We decorate evil in ornamental denial and quake from its ponderous advance. It seems to march inexorably toward victory in a war for the future. One dead child is a difficult battlefield on which to triumph, but Christina is every child. For every child we must move forward on every front to achieve victory on our terms.

Our promise to Christina must be to properly manage evil when we see it, to control its fiery temperament when we finally have it in our grasp, and to create an environment that does not allow fear and ignorance to fuel it. In other words, to protect the other children in ways we were not able to protect Christina.

Seven months ago Christina climbed alone to the top of the mountain to sit with my daughter Polly and to watch the sun rise over the horizon. Together, they and their brethren hold silent vigil and shepherd us as we attempt to keep our promise. The angel we were seeking was guiding us all along. ■

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: _____

Address: _____

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

Discover Card Visa MasterCard

Credit card number is: _____

Expiration date: _____

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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