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Ed Smart and Ahmad Rivazfar Make Stop in Columbus as Part of Cross Country Bike Trip to Advocate for Laws to Protect Children from Predators

COLUMBUS, OHIO – On Monday, August 23, 2010, Ed Smart and Ahmad Rivazfar, both parents of child abduction and abuse victims, will travel to Columbus, Ohio by bicycle as part of an awareness and fundraising campaign for the Surviving Parents Coalition (SPC) child advocacy initiatives. While in Columbus, Rivazfar and Smart will stop at the Ohio Statehouse Lawn, Broad & High in downtown Columbus from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m., to meet guests and to share information on how to protect children. From Columbus Smart and Rivazfar will ride to Indianapolis, Ill.

The Surviving Parents Coalition consists of 43 members, and is made up of parents of children who were abducted, sexually assaulted, murdered, recovered or are still missing. Through legislative efforts SPC aims to significantly improve public awareness about prevention as well as legislative progress, facilitate hands-on safety education in schools for children through young adults and promote best practices for law enforcement and communities in responding to predatory crimes.

During the stop in Columbus, Rivazfar and Smart will be joined by SPC member, Linda Walker, the mother of Dru Sjodin, who at age 22, was kidnapped from a mall parking lot in North Dakota in November 2003. Nearly five months later, Dru's body was discovered in a ravine just outside of Crookston, Minn. Her murderer, who had only recently been released after serving twenty-three years for attempted kidnapping and assault, has since been convicted and sentenced to death.

Walker has since become a tireless advocate of women and children; speaking out against the violence that too frequently takes aim at them. Her journey has taken her throughout the country as she speaks to college students, law enforcement and the media to raise awareness and rally support for legislation. In 2004, Senator Byron Dorgan and representative Earl Pomeroy sponsored Dru's Law, to create a National Sexual Offenders Database. Walker was relentless in her conviction to bring this very important legislation to the attention of the public and every Congressman. In July 2006, her efforts were rewarded when she joined the families of other victims in the White House Rose Garden to witness President Bush signing into law, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, which included Dru's Law.

Rivazfar and Smart, who began their journey on August 21, in Rochester, N.Y., will end on September 22 in Los Angeles, Calif. Other cyclists are welcome to join in on the 3,500-mile journey, which travels through 12 states and 26 cities. The awareness

campaign, *“Ride for Their Lives,”* seeks to increase public knowledge and raise \$1,000,000 to help advocate for laws that protect children and fight to eradicate predatory crimes Nation wide.

The purpose of this month-long journey is to focus on four main legislative issues surrounding child abuse and abduction cases:

1. **DNA Collection on Felony Arrest** – to lobby for DNA collection on felony arrest, not just on felony conviction. Currently, 24 states have passed some form of DNA on felony arrest legislation, but there are 26 states that should follow suit. www.dnasaves.org.
2. **Protect our Children Act of 2008** – a law that gives more resources to the investigation and interdiction of child pornography and exploitation cases.
3. **The Adam Walsh Act** – The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, and the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act set minimum standards for a national sex offender’s registration and notification system.
4. **“Not ONE More Child”** – A Child Safety Education Initiative that educates and empowers children to recognize, avoid, resist, and escape dangerous situations and violence including bullying, assault, abuse and abduction.

The Surviving Parents Coalition was pleased to work with State Senator David Goodman and Representative Carlton Weddington on enactment of SB 99 to expand the DNA database by testing all people arrested for committing a serious felony. Strengthening the Ohio DNA program will assist law enforcement in quickly and accurately identifying perpetrators of violent crimes. Additionally, it will assist law enforcement in solving crimes, preventing crimes and exonerating the innocent. Presently, there are 100,624 known sex offenders in the State of Ohio and 18,059 personal computers that have been identified trading child pornography in a 48 hour period.

Sponsors of *“Ride for Their Lives”* include Limited Brands, Full Moon Vista Bike & Sport, Beau Productions, Brabon Justice International, LLC and Dixon Schwabl.

For more information about *“Ride for Their Lives”* and the Surviving Parents Coalition, visit www.RideforTheirLives.com.

The Surviving Parents Coalition is a parent-driven, 501c4 organization committed to saving lives. The coalition’s founding demonstrates the power of survival and how suffering can motivate people to accomplish extraordinary things. SPC lobbies for funding and legislation because they are essential to effective change. Its goal is to ensure young people mature naturally without abuse and emotional turmoil. The SPC is determined to grow and spread out nationally one family at a time.

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