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

SAN JOSE, CALIF. – On Friday, September 17, 2010, Ed Smart and Ahmad Rivazfar, both parents of child abduction and abuse victims, will travel to San Jose, Calif. by bicycle as part of an awareness and fundraising campaign for the Surviving Parents Coalition (SPC) child advocacy initiatives. While in San Jose, Rivazfar and Smart will stop at Santa Clara County Sherriff's Office located at 55 West Younger Avenue at 4:30 p.m., to meet guests and to share information on how to protect children. From San Jose, Smart and Rivazfar will ride to Salinas, Calif.

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 San Jose, Rivazfar and Smart will be joined by SPC member Vicki Kelly, who last saw her seventeen year old son, Tommy, when he returned home after being gone all night on January 26, 1999. He was last seen with an adult male who was known to be a methamphetamine user. Tommy walked out the door with this man and it would be a year and a half before Tommy's skull and 25 bones were recovered in a row of blackberry bushes, three miles from his home.

Due to the circumstances law enforcement simply took a report over the phone and told the family to wait. It took six days after Tommy vanished before anyone took notice. Immediately, four people called the TV station, and reported that a boy who looked like the photo on the news, had run to them begging for help. It took five more days for a detective to be assigned to the case, and over three weeks for search and rescue dogs to be sent out. The man with whom Tommy had last been seen was finally brought in for questioning and admitted to having injected Tommy with methamphetamine all night before he disappeared, but he denied knowing what happened to Tommy and law enforcement was unwilling to press charges without a body.

Kelly says that when she received the phone call confirming that the skull was identified as Tommy, she "vowed to be a voice for the missing and for other families of missing children." She established The Tommy Foundation (a 501(c)(3)non-profit

organization) that addresses the issues of missing children and helped to pass several laws. The "Tommy Law," mandating law enforcement training on best practices for reporting missing children, was signed on May 25, 2001, National Missing Children Day. In 2007, Tom and Vicki Kelly spearheaded the unanimous passage of the Missing Person legislation, the Gaddis Pond Ramirez Act, which established law enforcement policy for the investigation of missing person cases, and identification of unidentified human remains. In 2004, the Tommy Foundation drafted the Proclamation that was signed by Oregon Governor Kulongoski, declaring May 25th, National Missing Children Day, as Oregon's Missing Children Day.

Rivazfar and Smart, who begin 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.

In 2004, California voters overwhelmingly endorsed Proposition 69, which requires DNA collection upon arrest for all felony crimes. Strengthening the California DNA program will assist law enforcement in quickly and accurately identifying perpetrators of violent crimes. Presently, there are 309,073 known sex offenders in the state of California and 250,410 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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