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

CHICAGO, IL – On Saturday, August 28, 2010, Ed Smart and Ahmad Rivazfar, both parents of child abduction and abuse victims, will travel to Chicago, Illinois by bicycle as part of an awareness and fundraising campaign for the Surviving Parents Coalition (SPC) child advocacy initiatives. While in Chicago, Rivazfar and Smart will stop at Richard J. Daley Plaza Civic Center located at 50 West Washington. at 4 p.m., to meet guests and to share information on how to protect children. From Chicago, Smart and Rivazfar will ride to Springfield, 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 Chicago, Rivazfar and Smart will be joined by SPC members, Linda Walker and Kathy Teague. Walker is 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.

Teague's tragic story began the evening of August 8, 1983. Her 18 month old daughter, Vinyette, was being taken care of by her Grandparents while Teague and her husband were out for dinner. Vinyette was playing in the apartment's hallway when Vinyette's grandmother went into the apartment to answer a phone call. When she returned someone had abducted their precious child. To date this case remains unsolved and the family is still searching. Teague has become active in helping other families of missing love ones through Team Hope.

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.

Currently in Illinois it is not required to collect DNA upon felony arrest. Representative Susana Mendoza (D- Chicago) and Sen. Matt Murphy (R-Palatine) have championed legislation that would expand the DNA database by testing all people arrested for committing a serious felony, but the State Legislature has failed to pass this bill. Strengthening the Illinois DNA program will assist law enforcement in quickly and accurately identifying perpetrators of violent crimes. Presently, there are 108,277 known sex offenders in the state of Illinois and 20,436 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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