



## Child Predators on the Internet

Computers, cell phones, chat rooms, social networking sites, digital cameras—these gadgets of our new high-tech world are the same tools criminals have at their fingertips, taking the sexual abuse of children to a whole new level.



The families of children who were preyed upon online are telling their stories with the hope that parents will pass their lessons on to their own children.

Danielle's 14-year-old daughter Kristin was a healthy, happy 8th grader who ran track and got good grades. So when Kristin asked her mom for a computer, Danielle agreed. As a self-described overprotective mom, Danielle laid down some rules: No social networking sites or chats with strangers.

"She called me an overprotective mother because I always wanted to know what she was doing, where she was going, drove her everywhere she was going," Danielle says.

Danielle's first rule was no social networking sites, which Kristin broke. "My son did discover that Kristin had her profile up on a social networking site, and that day we took her computer away for five and a half months."



What Danielle didn't know was that Kristin was already involved with a man online who was 13 years older than her, 27-year-old Kiley Ryan Bowers.



The day before Kristin's 16th birthday, Danielle says she heard Kristin crying in her room. "Very, very deep sobs. I went in and asked her: 'Honey, honey, what is wrong? What is wrong? I'm so worried about you.'"

Kristin revealed her relationship with Bowers to her mother and told her she had been used. "She proceeded to tell me about a 27-year-old man from Texas that had told her he loved her, told her she was beautiful."

Danielle was shocked to learn that Bowers had already lured her daughter to a motel room. "I just stopped and I was stunned and my heart sank," Danielle says. Kristin told her mom that after talking to Bowers for eight months, he flew in from Texas to California to see her. "She went with him in the night at 1 in the morning after we had gone to bed and went to a motel with him where he sexually attacked her. She was crying. She told me that she felt like he raped her."



While all this was happening, Danielle says she never knew. "Everything in a mother wants to protect and rescue their child. That's how we're made. And when something so awful happens, you just think, 'I didn't protect my child.'"

That day, Danielle says she called the police with Kristin's full cooperation. Danielle says Kristin told her, "I realize now that he used me...and he threw me away."

Five weeks later, Danielle and her husband came home from church and couldn't find their daughter. After looking around the house, Danielle heard her husband scream. "He screamed in this voice that I've never heard before," Danielle says. "I grabbed the phone, I dialed 911, and I ran down the hallway. I had them on the phone and I was answering their questions, and my husband was cutting my daughter down from the rafters."

"I just grabbed my son and I held onto him and said, 'No, no, no, no, no,' probably 500 times," Danielle says.



Danielle says she believes she knows why Kristin took her own life. Overnight, Danielle says Kristin had become depressed. "After [Bowers] got what he wanted in his flight to Texas, then he became cruel on the Internet," she says. "I learned after my child passed away that the depression can be very serious when it's in a clinical form, and this man emotionally destroyed my daughter, and when he emotionally destroyed her and used her, it caused and triggered the depression."

Danielle wants all parents to know that every child is at risk of being seduced by a child predator. Although she had set some basic ground rules with Kristin, she has since learned more safety tips.

Before her death, Danielle says Kristin cooperated fully with police. "From the time that she told me about him to the time that she passed away was only five weeks, and the FBI got on the case and they arrested him the night before her memorial service."

Bowers was sentenced to nine years in prison for traveling across state lines to have sex with a minor and transporting child pornography.

"I would like him to be in prison for life," Danielle says. "I believe he killed my child."

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