



March 22, 2009

Family wants tougher laws

By Cindy Kranz
ckranz@enquirer.com

Jessica Logan's nude cell-phone photo - meant for her boyfriend's eyes only - was sent to hundreds of teenagers last year in at least seven Greater Cincinnati high schools.

• <http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Site=AB&Date=20090322&Category=NEWS01&ArtNo=903220803&Ref=PH>,'"width=775,height=695,status=no,toolbar=no,location=no,scrollbars=no,resizable=no');return false;">Photos: Jessica Logan

The 18-year-old Sycamore High School senior was then bombarded with taunts: slut, porn queen, whore.

On July 3, Jessie hanged herself in her bedroom.

She was Albert and Cynthia Logan's only child.

"My only baby that I will never be able to touch again," Cynthia Logan said through tears. "I will never have grandchildren. I will never be able to hand down my heirlooms. I'm just devastated by these parents that allow their children to do and say anything they want."

Now, Jessie's parents are attempting to launch a national campaign seeking laws to address "sexting" - the practice of forwarding and posting sexually explicit cell-phone photos online. The Logans also want to warn teens of the harassment, humiliation and bullying that can occur when that photo gets forwarded.

Cynthia Logan and Parry Aftab, an attorney and one of the leading authorities on Internet security and cyberbullying, plan to attach Jessie's name to a national campaign to educate teens about the dangers of sexting.

Aftab, based in New York, is the catalyst for a network of volunteers working to stop cyberbullying. She operates two Web sites: wired-safety.org, the world's largest and oldest cyber safety organization, and stopcyberbullying.org.

"Schools need to understand our kids are targeting each other and how technology is being used as a weapon," Aftab said. "None of them (the schools) know what to do. Many of them ... think it's not their problem. They want to close their eyes and put fingers in their ears, saying it's a home issue."

Compassionate and carefree

Jessie's friends and family described her as an artistic, bubbly, compassionate carefree spirit who had many friends in several schools. She was also a "tiger," who would relentlessly stand up for someone.

"But she couldn't stand up for herself," Albert Logan said.

"I think when you're constantly knocked down, you lose your self-esteem," his wife added.

Jessie was not alone in sending nude cell-phone photos. Her friends point to the increasing pressure on teenage girls to send nude photos to their boyfriends.

A national study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy revealed that 1 in 5 teen girls or 22 percent say they have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude images online of themselves.

Some area school resource officers and principals estimate that at least half of the students have an inappropriate photo on their cell phone.

After the cell-phone photo was disseminated, Jessie's outgoing personality turned inward.

The Logans blame a circle of five friends from three other high schools for forwarding the photo.

According to Cynthia Logan, Jessie took the photo and sent it to the boy she had been dating for one to two months. He, in turn, forwarded it to four girls, she said. Efforts to reach the former boyfriend were unsuccessful.

Lauren Taylor, a friend since childhood and a Sycamore senior last year, discovered the photo had been forwarded when two girls in her class showed it off. She broke the news to Jessie.

"Her head just dropped, and she started crying," Lauren said. "And then, we went straight up to the counselor's office. And after that, she did not want to go back out in the hallway.

"She just totally changed. She wasn't as outgoing and kind of kept to herself, where she would normally be like jumping around. Instead her head was just down, and she would always be crying," Lauren said. "I remember her constantly calling my phone crying."

When the taunting started at school, Jessie skipped classes, sometimes slipping out a door to sleep in her car in the parking lot. When truancy notices showed up, her mother started dropping her off at school, but Jessie hid crying in the school bathroom.

"I watched her get kicked out of maybe three or four parties over the summer just for having 'a reputation,'" said Steven Arnett, a friend of hers who graduated last year from Moeller High School.

After seeing what Jessie went through, he said, "There's no reason to send pictures like that, no matter what a guy asks for. I don't think that's an acceptable thing to do."

She couldn't even escape when she went home, her close friends said.

"I'd be with her and she'd get numbers that weren't even in her contacts, random numbers that she didn't know, texting her, 'You're a whore, you're a slut,'" Lauren said.

"Or, she'd get on MySpace and get messages from people calling her those names, or Facebook would be the same way. It was constant. She'd go home thinking, 'Oh I'm going to get away from this,' but she never could get away from it."

The Logans said Sycamore High School and the school resource officer didn't do enough to help Jessie. Sycamore sent truancy notices, Cynthia Logan said, but no calls or letters about what was happening to her daughter in school and no notices to other parents about explicit cell-phone photos. And no charges were filed by the resource officer, she said.

Sycamore Superintendent Adrienne James said she couldn't discuss specifics of Jessie's situation. The perils of technology was a topic at a parent information night, she said.

"It is a form of bullying, and that is something we cannot tolerate. The difficulty is stopping it. ... That's why we stress with our kids that the moment you push 'send,' the damage is done."

Educators and parents must be involved, James said, in talking to teens about making good choices, positive self-imaging and avoiding risky behaviors.

Montgomery Officer Paul Payne, the school resource officer, said he confronted some of the girls who forwarded Jessie's photo, even though they attend another school. He asked them to delete the photo from their phones.

"Could she have pressed charges? No, because she's 18," Payne said, adding that there were some areas that could have been explored. "The investigation stopped at her wish, because she basically didn't want this to go any further. ... You respect the wishes of an 18-year-old. In the eyes of the law, she can make her own decision."

Payne said he supports the Logans' efforts to change laws. "Let's face it. The law hasn't caught up to what the original law was designed for."

Jessie expressed regrets about taking and sending the photo, her mother said. She wanted to warn other kids. At Payne's suggestion, she did an anonymous television interview.

"My little girl wanted to get the message out to other children not to make the same mistake she did," Albert Logan said.

Despite missing so much school, Jessie graduated. She began making plans for a new job and college at the University of Cincinnati, where she would major in graphic design.

Then, a 16-year-old Sycamore student hanged himself last June 27. Cynthia Logan put her arms around her daughter, who was sobbing when she heard. Against her parents' wishes, Jessie went to his visitation and funeral, because a friend needed a ride.

'She snapped all of a sudden'

After the boy's funeral, Jessie went to Lauren's house and ranted about why the boy had committed suicide.

"She just kept crying," Lauren said. "Basically, what she kept saying was, 'How could he do this to his family? How could he put his family through so much pain, and his friends? ... I never thought that she would go and do the same thing.'"

Later that day, Jessie's mother suggested that she just stay home and chill out.

Jessie complained that she was 18 and planned to go out.

Jessie took a shower before getting ready. Her dad was home. Cynthia Logan was on the phone with her brother, walking in the hallway, when Jessie came out of the bathroom and went into her bedroom.

"That is the last time I saw my daughter alive," Cynthia Logan said, her voice lowering to a whisper.

Her mother discovered Jessie hanging in her bedroom.

"There sat her phone. Her straightener was hot. She was ready to go out. I don't know what happened," she said, choking back tears. "It was impulsive, like she snapped all of a sudden. You have all this weight, and it was just one more thing."

The Logans may never have closure. She did not leave a note.

Jessie placed five phone calls before she died.

The Logans wonder if something that was said in a cell-phone conversation set her off during the last moments of her life.

Albert and Cynthia Logan have gone public with Jessie's story, hoping to change vague state laws that don't hold anyone accountable for sexting. They also want to warn kids about what can happen when nude cell-phone photos are shared.

"We want a bill passed," Cynthia Logan said.

"It's a national epidemic. Nobody is doing anything - no schools, no police officers, no adults, no attorneys, no one."
