

A Note from Gabriel's Mom

Ten years ago my husband and I received the call that every parent dreads: 17-year-old Gabe was missing from his school, and no one could find him...

In the following four months we searched for Gabe. We kept thinking there *had* to be resources for parents to access during the worst, most fearful moments of their lives. We found there were precious few. It became evident very early that we were on our own.

The police had virtually no resources for the search and rescue of a missing child. They wanted to help, but had too many cases and too little help.

Somehow a missing 17 year old wasn't newsworthy! But once we finally convinced the press to cover the story, a few search teams came forward to help. But there were *no* coordinated efforts whatsoever.

We bought billboard space, worked with teams searching by water, air, and land while others rappelled down cliffs. We hired a string of investigators of varying degrees of skill. We found absolutely *no one* who could advise us how to proceed – all they said was: "go home, he will turn up." I don't know many parents who would think that advice was responsive in the least!

Finally, we found our child's body and our lives changed forever.

It is naïve to think that life ever returns to normal. However, we did have choices about how things could be improved going forward. We resolved that no other parent should have to endure the catastrophic worry of a lost child alone and without resources. And that is how Texas Center for the Missing (formerly known as Gabriel's Gifts) came to be.

We have built collaborative relationships between willing, skilled search teams and law enforcement. Where once they were skeptical of each other, they now partner. This benefits families and children.

Texas Center for the Missing administers the nation's strongest chapter of Amber Alert. Our training model is nationally recognized. The Amber Alert in our 13-county region is responsible for the safe recovery of over 100 children with a success rate of 94%! Concerned citizens are passionate about helping these families and we are honored by our association.

Texas Center for the Missing provides child identification kits for parents should their child ever be lost. We do extensive community education of children to help them be aware, to prevent their being abducted, and to know what to do if they are. There is *much more* we need to do and we need your help!

You are invited to help Texas Center for the Missing in our mission. I would be grateful for your participation and your support. Thank you.

Doreen J Wise