



National Children's Advocacy Center

Standing beside and slightly behind her father on a rainy Monday morning, 17-year-old Joanie waited somewhat impatiently as the receptionist opened the door at the Team building on NCAC's campus. Joanie had a wary, apprehensive look in her eyes and a guarded posture with her arms crossed. She had multiple piercings, a black graphic t-shirt, and ripped jeans. When Joanie's mom arrived, she and her husband flanked Joanie in a physical, emotional, and symbolic fashion – they were here to protect their daughter, to be her fiercest advocates, and to stand by her in these uncharted waters.

Joanie was a budding artist with immense talent and her parents encouraged her participating in art classes. The instructor Joanie seemed to connect with most and helped her flourish was a 32-year-old graphic artist teaching classes at a local art studio. Over the course of seven months, Joanie thrived in art classes and began expressing interest in pursuing graphic design as a career. Her parents were thrilled to see the teenager who had previously seemed a bit adrift, find a focus and passion. What they didn't expect was that the art instructor would begin to manipulate Joanie and interact with her on a level far beyond her years.

Her instructor began privately messaging her on a social media app, wooing her with his attention and praise. He initially asked for pictures of her artwork from home, then graduated to asking for pictures of Joanie, and eventually asking for explicit pictures of Joanie because he "thought he might love her." Joanie was flattered and excited by the attention and after initially hesitating, she began to comply with sending pictures, but the few pictures she sent were used to further manipulate her, with the threat of telling her parents if she didn't send more. And finally, the art lessons turned much more sinister with the instructor forcing Joanie to comply with his demands for sex. He threatened to share her private pictures and even "share" her with his friends, if she didn't do exactly what he wanted.

Like so many 17 year olds, Joanie viewed her parents as "too old" and "too uncool" to ever be able to understand anything about her – but the night her dad found her crying unconsolably on the floor beside her bed after yet another demand for more explicit pictures, she nearly collapsed with relief as her dad said, "Don't worry, I've got you."

Joanie's parents were good parents and loved their daughter unconditionally. As a career military officer, her dad thought he had seen and heard tough things but his daughter's pain and situation was beyond anything he might have imagined and his instincts to protect kicked in hard. Joanie's mom worked in HR for a local company and wanted to make her daughter's hurt go away, all while blaming herself for somehow not knowing what Joanie had been experiencing at the art studio. Her parent's resolved that night in Joanie's room that they would do whatever it took to get Joanie help and to ensure that no other young woman experienced this trauma with this man.

So, on that Monday morning in the rain, as Joanie and her parents entered the Team building to talk with an Investigator with the Madison County Sheriff's Department and then later having weekly therapy with an NCAC therapist, Joanie knew that more and more people were joining her parents as her protectors.

It's been 16 months since Joanie first came to NCAC, but in the coming weeks, she along with her parents will face the art instructor in court – a terrifying proposition for any young woman, but one that she knows she'll be able to handle. **She knows that she has nothing to feel guilt or shame about, despite his best efforts to convince her otherwise. She knows that she is going to move through this horrifying experience with more strength than she knew she had and that this episode in her life does not and will not define her as a person.**

This healing is without cost to Joanie and her parents – **thanks to you and people just like you who support her healing with their generosity.**

Will you consider supporting Joanie and the many children who walk through the doors at the NCAC every day? With a financial gift of support, you will change hearts and lives. You might also consider becoming a monthly donor – consistent monthly contributions over time become gifts that are both more affordable and significantly impactful, especially when so many more children need your support now more than ever.

I hope you'll consider making a gift to support all children.

YOUR GENEROSITY CHANGES LIVES,




Chris Newlin, MS LPC
Chief Executive Officer
National Children's Advocacy Center

P.S. Please keep children like Joanie in your thoughts as we continue to champion and strengthen the global response to child abuse. Your gift helps children's hearts to heal.



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**National Children's
Advocacy Center**
210 PRATT AVE NE, HUNTSVILLE AL 35801
WWW.NATIONALCAC.ORG | 256.533.KIDS (5437)