

A missing person poster for Erin Pospisil. On the left is a headshot of a young woman with long brown hair wearing an orange shirt. Below the photo is a black box with the text "ERIN POSPISIL" and "AGE 15" in white. To the right of the photo, the text reads "Still MISSING" in large, bold letters, with "Still" in black and "MISSING" in red. Below that is "Have you seen Erin?" in black. At the bottom right, it says "1-800-THE-LOST" in large black letters, and "HelpFindaChild.com" in smaller black letters below it.

Still
MISSING
Have you seen Erin?
1-800-THE-LOST
HelpFindaChild.com

ERIN POSPISIL
AGE 15

Erin Kay Pospisil has been missing since Sunday June 3, 2001. She was six weeks past her 15th birthday. That evening she left home at around 8:45 pm to go to a friend's house (Brit's) to watch movies. It was the first weekend of summer vacation. They were excited about the first "Summer Monday". The girls were planning a friend's surprise party to be held on the upcoming Thursday.

Erin got a ride over to Brit's house. Curtis, a friend of Erin's older brother, was leaving at the same time so he agreed to give her a ride. When they got to Brit's house, no one answered the door. As Erin was walking back to Curtis' truck, a dark colored Chevrolet Cavalier with tinted rear windows car pulled up to the curb. Erin went up to the car and was having a conversation with someone in the car. She told Curtis, "These guys will give me a ride home." Erin got in the back seat. It has been over 13 years and still, no one has brought her home.

Since the friend who witnessed her departure said Erin seemed to know the people in the car, the Cedar Rapids Police made the decision to classify Erin as a runaway. They discounted the fact that Erin did not take her Day-Timer, make-up case, a change of clothes, or any other belongings with her.

Early leads that were furnished suggested that Erin's disappearance might be related to Cedar Rapids and Chicago Gang activity and an area of Chicago referred to as "ghost town". We investigated on our own with Chicago law enforcement. The area that the police in Chicago said was probably where we were talking about was canvassed. But we learned nothing. They did tell us, "That's a very concentrated neighborhood. If she was out there, she'd stick out like a sore thumb. If someone there has her they won't let her out of the house."

What we believe was our one reliable sighting came in the spring of 2002. Erin was spotted at a convenience store in Cedar Rapids. She was riding in the back seat of a car with Illinois license plates. This tip was provided to Cedar Rapids Police, however the car was not found. We have never been able to verify the sighting. The person who sighted her knows her well and is still convinced that it was her. This has been our "ray of hope" to hold onto.

Erin disappeared before the Amber Alert system existed in Iowa. But even if it had existed, her disappearance wouldn't qualify for an Amber Alert. We don't have a license plate. We don't have a description of the person she got in the car with. And children classified as runaways don't qualify at all.

At the time, KCRG in Cedar Rapids had a program called Operation Quickfind. The police can initiate a request to air information about a missing child. She may have qualified for that. But the Police department didn't request it until after she had been missing for 12 days. That was two days after we talked to our first detective. 10 days is how long it took for them to decide her disappearance warranted an investigation.

My daughter, Carolyn was quoted by the newspaper as saying that she almost hoped that Erin really was a runaway. "Because at least then we would know this was her choice. And it sure is better than thinking about any other alternative."

We haven't found Erin but we have learned a lot over the years in our search for her. We have heard stories from frustrated parents about girls that had runaway and then come home weeks or sometimes a couple of months later. Once a runaway is home. Law Enforcement closes the case. They don't follow up to find out what happened to make them leave. Or what happened while the children were gone.

Awful things happen to runaways. "Your parents really don't care about you. I love you. I'll take care of you." They can easily be engulfed in a life of drugs and sex trade. Kept up for days on drugs. Invited to "parties" to get them drunk and break down their choices. The guy that was so cool to them now is trading them to his "friends." "Just hook up with my friend for the night. He'll flip you some cash and he'll give you a place to crash." "Just bring the cash to me. I'll make sure you get what you need." And just that quick, they have ended up in the sex trade.

Posted on websites for a "companion." Moved from one town to the other. One "friend" to the other. All the time being told, "Why go home? They won't want you now." Or they just don't make the cut as a good girlfriend. So they are sent home. To the frustrated parents that now don't know what to do with this 'out of control' teen.

We've learned that thinking of Erin as being a "runaway" sure isn't a better scenario. And we've learned that we are far from the only family that is going through the same nightmare.

New stories about "busted sex trafficking rings." Are occasionally in the news. Girls being rescued and pimps being arrested. Stories like that used to bring brief moments of hope. Will Erin be one of the girls rescued? Will she find her way home now?

Doug Minney, Grandfather of Erin Pospisil, 319.899.3497

For more info on Erin, go to <http://helpfindachild.org>