

## Search on for missing teen

**By Steve Gravelle**  
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**CEDAR RAPIDS** -- They're so common, the homemade fliers almost slip beneath the mental radar, sharing utility poles, laundromat bulletin boards and convenience store windows with notices for yard sales, neighborhood meetings or church suppers.

"MISSING Have You Seen Erin?" is the headline Carolyn Minney chose for the poster she made after her stepdaughter, Erin Pospisil, went missing. Minney hasn't eaten or slept regularly since.

"Everybody's taking it hard, but her one brother especially is," said Minney of northeast Cedar Rapids. "The two of them have been very close."

Erin, 15, was last seen June 3 in the 100 block of 12th Street SE, getting into a black Chevrolet Cavalier with tinted rear windows. The car, about 10 years old, was unfamiliar to Erin's friends or family, but she seemed to know the people inside, according to the friend who witnessed her departure.

"She said something to one of the people in the car, and we haven't seen her since," said Minney, Erin's stepmother for 8 years. "We hope she ran away. Isn't that bad? But it's better than the alternative."

Most reported runaways are located, often within days, according to the National Runaway Switchboard. But at three weeks, Erin's been gone longer than most, and, as time passes, it's more likely she may have left the area, according to the group's spokeswoman, Cathleen Carolan.

"The longer the kid is gone, the harder it is for them to come back, for a number of reasons," said Carolan. Most prevalent is the youth's fear over their welcome on their return.

"Each day gets harder and harder for them and they get caught up into a certain life," Carolan said.

Most first-time runaways stay within 300 miles of home, according to Carolan. But as time passes, they may flee to larger cities where they can blend in with other youth and avoid the attention of authorities.

Carolan said it may be time for Erin's family to "widen the net."

"They need to talk to the friends," she said. "Did they ever talk about going someplace? Kids don't usually do things without setting out a trail, at least with their friends."

Minney said she's checked with Erin's relatives in Nevada, Iowa. Erin's friends are at a loss, too.

"Erin's a very social kid," said Minney. "It's not like her. She has friends she calls every single day, and they haven't heard from her."

The National Runaway Switchboard takes toll-free calls -- 1-(800) 621-4000 -- and relays messages from missing youth to their families. The Chicago-based staff also arranges conference calls between parents and children.

According to Switchboard's records, most runaways flee over problems at school or with their family.

Erin had "routine sibling stuff" between her sister and two brothers, Minney said. But her attendance at Metro High School, where she was a freshman, was spotty.

"She was doing fine, as long as she goes," Minney said.

Police have run down leads provided by Erin's family, said Sgt. Bob Hagist. Patrol officers have been provided copies of her photo.

Erin Pospisil is 5 feet 2 inches tall and weighs 125 pounds. She has brown eyes and dark brown hair with red highlights. She was last seen wearing beige short overalls and a light-colored tank top.

Anyone who's seen Erin, or may have information about her whereabouts, should call Cedar Rapids police at 286-5378 or 1-(800) 272-7463.

"We just want to know she's OK," Minney said. "She's not in any trouble, or anything."

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