

Mom of abuse victim raising awareness of teen dating violence

A Valley mom is raising awareness about abusive teen relationships after losing her daughter to an abusive boyfriend.



By: [Nick Ciletti](#)

Posted at 4:00 AM, May 13, 2021 and last updated 5:34 AM, May 13, 2021

PHOENIX — Raising awareness about teen dating violence is now one Valley mom's life mission after losing her daughter to an abusive boyfriend more than a decade ago.

It's been 13 years since Bobbi Sudberry lost her daughter Kaity to an abusive relationship, but for this family, it feels like it could have happened yesterday.

"It still affects us tremendously," says Sudberry. "And it's something you don't ever get over. You know, you just learn to live with it."

Kaity was 16 years old when she started dating her then-boyfriend. According to Bobbi, Kaity's boyfriend eventually became verbally and physically abusive.

"As time goes by, his behavior escalates, okay, he goes from being verbally abusive to you're trying to isolate her to, you know, putting her down and a lot of cyber...digital abuse going on."

WARNING SIGNS OF RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

-ISOLATING YOU FROM FRIENDS/FAMILY

-JEALOUSY/INSECURITY

-PHYSICAL ABUSE

-CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

-PUTTING YOU DOWN

-PRESSURING YOU

-EXPLOSIVE TEMPER/MOOD SWINGS

-READING MESSAGES WITHOUT PERMISSION

CREDIT: NATIONAL TEEN DATING VIOLENCE HELPLINE



Recognizing the signs, Sudberry tried to take out a restraining order against Kaity's boyfriend but was only able to get an injunction against harassment.

"There were a lot of gaps and a lot of misses."

Just five days later, something out of a nightmare happened.

As Kaity was walking home from school, her boyfriend approached her, shooting and killing her before taking his own life.

"From that day forward, our lives have never been the same, nor will they ever be the same."

Feeling powerless but determined, Sudberry summoned the strength to channel her grief. Nine

months after Kaity's death, she created Kaity's Way, a non-profit dedicated to teaching teens and young adults how to form healthy relationships.

"We really wanted to bring that to the community and help the community understand you're not alone. Victims are not to blame. And there is a lot of people out there that want to help you."

Kaity's Way has partnered with New Life Center in Phoenix to bring resources to teens who may be struggling in their own abusive relationships.

"Our relationship with Kaity's Way is so important because when we look at the issue of intimate partner violence, whether it is teen violence or adult violence, the starting point, and the need for prevention is so important for us," explains Myriah Moon, New Life Center's CEO.

Along with New Life Center, Kaity's Way helps parents and teens bridge the gap to start those difficult conversations.

"We need to be talking to our children, you know, and open with them," explains Sudberry.

Kaity's Way also helps teens and parents identify red flags in relationships, which include:

- **Isolation**
- **Jealousy**
- **Possessive behavior**
- **Trying to dominate the victim's life**

"These are all things that happen. And some of them do happen quite early on. And unfortunately, they're, you know, they're looked at as not a big deal, but they accumulate into a big deal after a while."

In 2009, Governor Jan Brewer signed "Kaity's Law" which extends domestic violence protection to people involved in dating relationships like Kaity's.



On January 28, 2008 a young Lady named Kaitlyn Marie Sudberry never made it home from school. Tragically, she was brutally murdered by her ex-boyfriend just one house away from her own loving home. Kaitlyn, also known as Kaity, was an intelligent, beautiful young lady. She was a senior in High School and accepted to Northern Arizona University. Kaity was one of five children for the Sudberry's. She had two brothers and two sisters. Even though, police reports were filed, an Injunction Against Harassment had been prepared to serve upon her ex-boyfriend and the support of her family, Kaity, her family and the community fell victim to this heinous crime.

In the wake of this terrible tragedy and after realizing how prevalent teen dating violence is Kaity's family decided to form a non profit 501(c)(3) approved tax exempt corporation, in Kaity's name and spirit, known as Kaity's Way. Kaity's heart went out to all less fortunate than herself, like the 20% of children involved in violent or potentially violent relationships.

Kaity's way was **P.E.A.C.E.** (**P**atience, **E**mpathy, **A**cceptance, **C**aring and **E**quality). Kaity was a gentle loving person, who innately possessed and lived by all of these qualities. She had a zest for life and wanted only the best for all those she came to know. She was so much to so many.

After further research it was found that 81% of adults admit that they did not realize that teen dating violence was an issue. In the year 2011 Kaity's Way independently surveyed nearly 2000 Arizona middle and high school students and found:

- 44% of them admitted knowing someone in a violent relationship
- 96% believe adults should be educated about teen dating violence.
- 98% stated that it benefits teenagers to hear Kaity's Story
- 99% believe they would be able to identify the warning signs of a violent relationship after hearing Kaity's Story.

The mere fact that so many of our children have identified knowing someone in a violent relationship is absolutely staggering and for this we have taken on a mission to promote understanding and educate the community to lessen the instances of violence among or against children through **P.E.A.C.E.** (**P**atience, **E**mpathy, **A**cceptance, **C**aring and **E**quality).

Our Vision is such that the Awareness and Education we provide will bring about the Prevention of violence and therefore a societal shift providing a generation of healthy respectful relationships to be followed by many others.