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In Grief, Family Finds a Mission

By KATE STONE LOMBARDI

White Plains

THE Bonistall home is full of pictures of Lindsey. There she is, with her head resting on her dad's shoulder, at the father-daughter dance at Good Counsel Academy. There she is in her prom dress, the price of which to this day her mother has not revealed to Lindsey's father, Mark. And there is Lindsey on a trampoline, petite in her blue jeans, with a look of pure joy on her face.

"She looks like she's having a hoot," said Lindsey's mother, Kathleen. "That was taken the month before she was killed."

Lindsey Bonistall was a 20-year-old sophomore at the [University of Delaware](#) when she was raped and murdered in her off-campus apartment on May 1, 2005. Her killer, James E. Cooke Jr., then set the apartment on fire to cover the crime. He was sentenced to death in March. The Bonistalls do not speak his name in their home.

But they do like to talk about Lindsey, and they have a story for nearly every photograph of her. The prom photo, for instance. Lindsey had begged her mother for the elegant Vera Wang gown, and her mom had relented. The night of the prom, Lindsey was riding in a limousine when two boys, athletes both, began bragging about the push-ups they could do.

Lindsey, her parents say, challenged them on the spot, then got out of the car and proceeded to do more push-ups than either of them — with one hand behind her back. The gown? It was fine.

The Bonistalls will tell you about Lindsey's gift for impersonations — how even at age 6, she could do a perfect Urkel, complete with hitched-up pants. They will describe Lindsey as always in flight — from the time she did gymnastics as a child, through her teenage years as a cheerleader (she was the "flier," the one tossed up) and later as a diver.

The childhood room that once housed their high-energy daughter now serves as the headquarters for the foundation, "Peace Outside Campus," that the Bonistalls hope will be her legacy. The mission is to promote the safety of college students who live off campus. Even the foundation's name brings another Lindsey story — her parents say she liked to end conversations by putting a peace sign to her lips, blowing a kiss and saying, "Peace Out."

Lindsey's death was anything but peaceful, and the Bonistalls — who have an older daughter, Kristen — are determined that other families avoid the kind of pain that they continue to endure. Today, family, friends and supporters will gather in Elmsford for the third annual Lindsey Run, a 5K race that raises money for the foundation.

The foundation's Web site, www.peaceoutsidecampus.org, offers Living Off-Campus 101, which has a checklist of what to look for in an off-campus apartment, as well as information on personal safety. Mr. Bonistall has also been working to set up a certification program for off-campus housing. This has proved challenging. Landlords are not always cooperative, and colleges have been reluctant to become involved in crime prevention outside their boundaries.

Several schools, including [Pace University](#), have foundation chapters on campus that aim to raise awareness of the issue among college students. And in a new foundation effort, Teens in Transition, college students will talk to high school seniors about living safely off campus. The program, which is scheduled to begin next month in White Plains, will open with a home video of Lindsey at her high school graduation, followed by headlines about her murder.

The Bonistalls attended the entire trial, listening to all the horrific details. They went, Mrs. Bonistall said, "because it was the last physical thing we could do for our daughter." Mr. Bonistall said there were times when he wanted to leap over the railing to stop Mr. Cooke from talking about Lindsey. He said he restrained himself by repeating a mantra that he and his wife used to get through the ordeal: "D.A.G." — dignity and grace.

Every day is still hard for the Bonistalls. They attend a support group for survivors of homicide victims. It's a club that no one wants to belong to, Mr. Bonistall said. On the other hand, he added, "It's the one place where someone can say, 'I know how you feel,' and they really do."

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