

Shari Nightingale is now raising her granddaughter Peyton, after her daughter Lindsay was killed as a result of dating violence

Get involved with Lindsay's Light!

Email Shari Nightingale at nightingale@comcast.net or Felicia Cooke at thecookes4@comcast.net.



Volunteers with Lindsay's Light donate to other families in need

Members of Nightingale's family have pulled together and continue to spread Lindsay's story



Lindsay's Light

After her daughter was killed by an abusive ex-boyfriend, Shari Nightingale decided to shine a light on preventing dating violence

Written by Elizabeth Padgett | Photography by Anetrius Wallace

He was upset and kept saying, "I'm sorry. I tried to make this relationship work. I just love you guys so much." then he hung up. Shari Nightingale received this call on her birthday in 2012. She texted her daughter Lindsay who was supposed to meet her for lunch but never received a response.

"It never occurred to me that he had hurt her. I just thought that he wanted to settle things before leaving for the service," Nightingale says, reflecting on the moment she received the call. The man she refers to was Lindsay's ex-boyfriend, whom she had ended a relationship with a year prior. He didn't take the breakup easily and had engaged in stalking, calling, and threatening suicide the last six months before he was scheduled to leave for military service.

A little before noon, Nightingale was put in contact with the Milam County Sheriff's Department in College Station. The dispatcher transferred her to an officer. "He asked me where I was and if anyone was with me. Still, it didn't register. I thought she might be hurt and I needed to go to the hospital or something."

The officer then told her that at 28 years old, Lindsay Ferrill had fallen victim to her stalker.

Signs of Abuse

In October 2011, the Katy High School graduate had ended an unhealthy relationship with her boyfriend. She was moving on in a healthy, new relationship when her ex-partner began attempting to enter her life again. His last effort involved what seemed like an event that would create closure for the two. He invited Lindsay to a going away party, saying that he was enlisting in the service and leaving for boot camp.

Lindsay never spoke of any physical abuse with her family and became very private about her relationship despite daily conversations with her sister. While Nightingale notes there was one incident early in their relationship that Lindsay had brushed off as a joke, a more serious incident occurred

not long after where she ended up calling 911 and having him arrested. He was ordered to attend anger management classes.

Before the final breakup Lindsay had tried ending it several times. Nightingale observes that during these instances are when family and friends witnessed his true character. "He began stalking her, calling her, pleading, threatening to kill himself, and promising to do all the things that she had wanted him to do. He would just show up wherever she was. That's when I could see how manipulative and relentless he was," she recalls. "He wouldn't give up until he got what he wanted, and that was to get her back. He even used her then 3-year-old daughter, Peyton, to get to Lindsay's heart."

Lindsay's Light

Nightingale shares that after Lindsay passed, she received a note in the mail from a group calling themselves Twelve Ordinary Women. "They existed only to be a blessing to others," Nightingale says.

Felicia Cooke, Nightingale's sister, patterned a group after the Twelve Ordinary Women in order to spread blessings, entitled Lindsay's Light. Each month Cooke, Nightingale, and the other women in the group meet and pool their donations after deciding to help a family in need. The money is then gifted in Lindsay's name.

One woman in the Lindsay's Light group happened to work in the same building as the Shield Bearer organization and brought them to Nightingale's attention. "I was so impressed by all the services they had to help those hurting and in need. Then I noticed they had a dating violence prevention program and knew I needed to speak with them," details Nightingale.

Since joining forces with Roy Wooten, executive director of Shield Bearer, the Lindsay's Light fund has been presented in two Katy ISD high schools and one church youth group. "We were especially touched when we received 65 letters from the students at one of the schools that heard Lindsay's

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story and were challenged to look at their own relationships,” says Nightingale. “There is truly a need to reach young people and teach them the red flags of an unhealthy relationship and the qualities of a healthy one. We don’t want anyone else to have to experience the loss that we have.” She reminds students in her presentations that abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual.

A Safe Place

If you think a friend or family member is potentially in an abusive relationship, talk to them and let them know your concern. “Let them know you are there and if need be, help them find a safe place they can go,” Nightingale adds. Often they may be ashamed and don’t want anyone to know what is happening. Be careful not to pass judgment in their state of vulnerability.

It is never the victim’s fault. Many woman may feel too afraid to leave a relationship that’s escalating into dangerous territory - they are not alone.

There are organizations that deal with these specific situations and are able to provide them with a safe haven along with resources. Nightingale also states, “If there are kids involved, it is especially important not only to keep them safe, but for them not to observe violent outbursts that they will think are okay and carry them into their adult life. They could very well become the abuser or the victim. Counseling is key to overcoming abuse in your life.” Abusers will not change and the abuse will only get worse each time. **KM**

ELIZABETH PADGETT is a professional writer and urges anyone who feels unsafe in their relationship to seek help.

Nightingale's quilt is a special keepsake made from pieces of Lindsay's clothing



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