

On Wednesday June 8th I became part of an email chain. This particular chain began with Kim Booth, the spouse of a partner in an IGAF Polaris firm in Atlanta. Three degrees later, I was informed that the daughter of Rob Spierer, a partner in our NY affiliate Perelson Wiener, was missing since 4:15 AM on June 3rd. She is a student at Indiana University, staying at school in Bloomington, Indiana to take a summer class.

Trying to make sense of an absurd situation, I sat in my office and tried to find available information on the net. Then I tried to contact Rob's partner Jay Friedman via his office and cell phones. Rob, Jay and I are part of accounting firms that are members of a worldwide, affiliate organization of local accounting firms: IGAF Polaris. We have attended conferences together for well over a decade and have developed mutual respect, and more importantly, lifelong friendships. Our Tax Conferences are not unlike a fraternity gathering for its annual meeting. Jay replied to my email with a phone call. He explained to me that he was in Indiana as part of the hundreds of volunteers augmenting the Police search.

As I already donated on line and prayed for Lauren's safe rescue, I queried if it was appropriate for me to fly up and join the search, or would more people just get in the way of the ongoing efforts. Jay assured me that Rob's desire was to have as many volunteers on the ground looking for his daughter as possible. That made my decision. I do not have personal contacts in the area to call and ask for assistance – I would have to provide such assistance myself - whether alone or with a team, I was bound for Bloomington.

I finished my client and office duties, attended a dinner function and called a family meeting at home. I informed my wife Beth, our 22 year old daughter Melissa, 20 year old son Corey, 3 days shy of 19 year old son Zachary and their friends Scott and Sraboni of the situation and offered any and all of them to join me. The travel plans were hinging on whether I was a team of one or more. I know we are each overscheduled with schools, jobs and impending birthday responsibilities, but I also know the size of my family's individual and collective hearts are limitless.

Melissa phoned her 22 year old fiancé Carlos before I even finished speaking. The boys jumped on FaceBook to see what was happening. I viewed the situation from a parent's perspective. Lauren is their peer; their age. They view it with a personal perspective. These are the moments that make me the proudest of my children. Their limitless ability to help others – personal sacrifices for zero personal benefit other than knowing they did the right thing – made my heart swell.

Ultimately we individually and collectively decided Melissa, Carlos and I would make the first trip to Bloomington the next day and return Saturday. I have been fortunate in my life to have people go out of their way to show me love and support at various junctures in my life. I have always tried to pay it forward. I wanted Rob to have the feeling of support that I represented. While it would be a short trip, its impact would be large.

We landed in Indianapolis and contacted Jay. There are three organized searches daily: 11AM, 2PM and 5PM. He was on the last organized search of the day. Without experience in this situation, I still was not sure how such a search was coordinated/accomplished. We agreed to meet for a late dinner. He was touched to see me, and I wanted information about the searches and how best to help the family. We had a late dinner with Jay, his and Rob's assistant Diane, her husband Dave and another coworker Erica. Melissa, Carlos and I learned that we were the most important resource needed: volunteers. They detailed the types of searches they completed: from walking down the street handing flyers out, putting them on cars, asking businesses to post them to walking through a forest hoping to stumble upon a small clue.

By the time dinner ended the owner sat with us and asked the same question I had been asked by the Wells Fargo bankers with whom I had to cancel lunch plans: What can we do to help? I allowed a few seconds for one of the team to answer, but it was clear exhaustion was quickly overtaking them. I explained that the situation needed more volunteers. Diane then went into hyper-drive, explaining to the owner and staff how/where to sign-up to volunteer. We learned that short-sleeves and shorts are appropriate in the 95°+ heat for an urban search (walking on the sidewalks and streets) but pants and long-sleeves are more suitable for a forest search (walking through trees/twigs/brush). The type of search would not be known until it occurred. We packed pants for just such a situation. However, we decided to go shopping early in the morning to acquire long-sleeve shirts.

We arrived back at the hotel around midnight. Jay knocked on the Boardroom door where the family had created the nerve center. Rob saw me, and we hugged. He was a bit overwhelmed with the support. I felt that the trip was already a success, providing him a jolt of positive reinforcement. I introduced him to Melissa and Carlos; he was nothing but thankful.

Each search began by signing up at the volunteer post on the corner of the building in which Lauren lives. We arrived at 10:40 AM for the 11:00 search. We each envisioned hundreds of people being gathered together and going out as one unit to search a particular area. What we did not know in advance is that it is a rolling process of signing the hundreds of people up, gathering them together in small groups of 4-8 and sending each small group to a specific section of the overall map. Below is my account of the day's events.

Friday, June 10, 11:00

Search 1 – As the search perimeter was widened, we formed a group with three other women; Lisa and Mitzi, sisters who created four hours in their work days to drive one hour each way and search for two hours, and Maggie, a local woman born and raised in Bloomington who wears cochlear devices and suffers from epilepsy.

We were given the task to search the grounds behind and between a local home improvement store (similar to Home Depot), a hotel and two car dealerships along Liberty Drive. The size of the area to be walked does not appear significant, but the brush is extremely thick behind the first store. The pants and long sleeves saved me from significant thorn/stick abrasions. For two hours we walk through patches of trees, undeveloped lots and any area that might be able to hide a person from being easily spotted. We don't expect to actually find Lauren, or even clues, but our job is vital to the larger operation of marking areas off the map that have been searched. The store, hotel and car dealerships are happy to assist us by allowing us permission to a) walk their property and b) post signs in highly visible places.

The sisters have to drive back to Indianapolis before we have time to take them to lunch as a token of thanks. The rest of us complete the search of a small forest before checking in at volunteer headquarters. Local businesses have provided free sandwiches, snacks, drinks, etc. for the volunteers.

Friday, June 10, 2:00

Search 2 – I grouped with four others, a local woman, her brother –an Iraq war veteran with brain damage from an IED, an IU alum who is a tax lawyer from a Indianapolis suburb (yes we exchanged business cards) and a student from a nearby suburb.

Our job was to canvass a middle to upper-middle class neighborhood about 4 miles from campus. We will search areas that we believe should be searched, but our main goal is to hand out flyers. We are trying to continue or create buzz about Lauren. Although this is a family (i.e., not student) neighborhood, the teens/young adults that live there have friends and friends with siblings that might see or hear something. The flyers reflect the new motto: Anything Small Could Be Big. We talk to people walking on the street, washing their cars, driving their cars. Most are fully aware of the problem and wish the family well. One jogger stops us to discuss a mountain bicycle that is out of place in their park. It stands out as being unclaimed for several days. We ask her to call it in. Even if it has nothing to do with Lauren, it probably is a problem unto itself. It is the first potential clue I come across – but I don't have hope that it will lead to her. Yet, Anything Small Could Be Big.

After walking the neighborhood we search the local schoolyard, which abuts a long, narrow forest with a creek running through it. A tall man walks towards us from the back of the woods to find out if we are from the tip line. He had heard about another project being promoted in the local media that day: Lunch For Lauren. People were urged to take 20 minutes out of their lunch break to search their own property or wherever they were. This gentleman, Brian, decided to go home during lunch and canvass the park near his property. He called in a sighting of soiled, male underwear at the edge of the park but has not had any contact from the police. I used the direct number provided to the searchers for the detective in charge of the case. She checks on the tip, calls me back to explain that they will not be following up as it is not of

interest to this case. Before heading back, Tom, the tax attorney, and I try to find the mountain bike as described by the jogger. We are unsuccessful, but find other joggers/bikers and continue to discuss the case with whoever will listen.

Energy is dissipating. Tom informs me that The Chocolate Mousse has the best shakes he has ever had. This sounds like an idea worth exploring, and it is. It is definitely a battery recharger, sorely needed before going back into the heat for the third Search of the day.

Friday, June 10, 5:00

Search 3 – We formed a group with 3 locals, Bethany and Alissa, 20 year old female students, and Rolondo, recently moved from Orlando, who works on the local naval base. We were asked by Channel 13 if they could join our search for a piece to be used on the 11 PM news, which we all agree is fine. This time we are given another urban search – walking a particular stretch of a busy, residential road. We find the shopping centers are already plastered with flyers so we decide to tape flyers onto telephone poles and ATM machines. I become a walking billboard by holding up a full page flyer for drivers to easily view.

Ultimately Bethany and Alissa lead us toward the local YMCA. However we discover the little league fields are rocking. We stop and are interviewed by Richard Essex before he has to get his footage to the editor.

<http://www.wthr.com/video?clipId=5946952&topVideoCatNo=103348&autoStart=true>

Then we get permission from the field supervisor to add more flyers to the bulletin boards and place some on windshields. We save the balance for the Y's front desk for people to take at their leisure. Exhausted, we treat Bethany and Alissa to Bub's Ugly Burger and Ice Cream (this little slice of heaven would take too much time to explain here) for a final meal.

Our flight out of Indianapolis is at 6 AM, so we brought back any remaining supplies to be used the next day by others. We are tired, but Rob and his family are in our hearts and minds.

We are collectively blown away by the generosity and just pure niceness of people that have zero connection to the situation but just want to help. It is horrible that it takes this tragedy for that to become public, but it is rewarding to know the good far outweigh the bad.

The following website is constantly updated and contains all information needed for those who wish to help in the search for Lauren:

<http://www.findlauren.com/index.html>

The "Help Find Lauren Fund " has been created by the Hillel Foundation at Indiana University, and donation can be made via this link. Checks can also be sent to the Hillel Foundation at

Indiana University with "Help Find Lauren Fund " noted on the memo line and mailed to the following address:

Hillel Foundation
730 East 3rd Street
Bloomington, IN 47401