



Tragic domestic violence death leads to new monitoring legislation

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Two years ago, Cindy Bischof was murdered by an ex-boyfriend who violated an order of protection. Her death led her family to launch a crusade.

Victim's family has helped pass legislation that requires those who violate an order of protection to wear GPS monitoring devices

Cindy Bischof is in every corner of her parents' Barrington living room.

She's in framed photographs and her favorite quote, "Be the change you want to be in the world," is embroidered on a couch cushion that her father, Frank, gently moves aside before sitting down.

"I think about her every day," he said. "Life really isn't the same without her. It's more empty."

It's been two years since the Arlington Heights resident was gunned down by her ex-boyfriend outside her Elmhurst real estate office. Since her death, her parents, family and friends have forever changed the landscape of domestic violence by introducing "Cindy's Law," which allows judges to order abusers to be electronically tracked via ankle bracelets transmitting their whereabouts to police.

Her younger brother, Michael Bischof, became the catalyst for changing Illinois state law to protect domestic abuse victims. He led bipartisan efforts to pass legislation named for his sister that Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed in August 2008, only six months after Cindy was killed.

And the law is spreading to other states. Michael Bischof was key in getting the law passed in Indiana, and it's being discussed in Wisconsin, Ohio, Kentucky and Missouri.

He travels all over the United States, talking to women's political groups and testifying. The family has been interviewed by ABC's Nightline, and national print media, including Fortune magazine, have written about "Cindy's Law."

Michael Bischof says his success is thanks to two factors: His timing and the simplicity of his idea.

Two days after Cindy died and before her funeral, he floated the idea of electronic monitoring bracelets at a Realtors' meeting in Rosemont, which was attended by hundreds of Cindy's co-workers. A day later he told the Daily Herald: "There are going to be a lot of people like Cindy, after Cindy, unless things change."

"That family is unbelievable," said state Rep. Suzie Bassi, a Palatine Republican who sponsored "Cindy's Law" in Illinois. "They were willing to share their story time and time again and come down to Springfield to testify. It was incredibly brave of them. Not many people can do that."

The family hopes to spread the law to other states, support new monitoring technology, set up better evaluations of offenders and push for school education on domestic violence as part of a life lessons

course.

Cindy's mother, Barbara Bischof, is proud of "Cindy's Law." And she's sad.

The bracelet would've saved Cindy, said Barbara Bischof, who attended between eight and 10 court hearings having to do with her daughter's restraining order against Michael Giroux, who killed himself after killing Bischof.

Cindy Bischof grew up in Mount Prospect and was the star of Prospect High School's class of 1982: homecoming queen, student council president, National Honor Society member, and voted "most likely to succeed."

She went to Indiana University but transferred to DePaul University and earned a bachelor's degree in finance. Attractive and bright, Cindy Bischof worked as a commercial Realtor and earned dozens of professional accolades, including being named one of the most powerful woman Realtors in the Midwest in 2006.

She became involved with Giroux, an attractive furniture salesman 17 years her senior, after they met at a downtown Arlington Heights Irish bar near Cindy's condo. Giroux lived a few blocks away in the Pioneer Park neighborhood of Arlington Heights and the two struck up a friendship.

They dated for about five years and moved in together around 2002. At that point, there were no warning signs that Giroux was dangerous, the family said.

"I never saw this coming. He was 'Uncle Mike' to my grandchildren," Barbara Bischof said.

Michael Bischof welcomed Giroux into his home, too.

"I remember watching them leave one night and thinking to myself 'He's good for her,'" Michael said.

Everything was fine until Giroux lost his job in 2007 and showed no motivation to look for another one. Cindy decided to end the relationship and asked him to move out.

That's when things took a scary turn.

A few weeks later, Giroux broke into Cindy's condo and caused \$75,000 in damage by breaking windows and throwing paint all over her condo's walls. He spent time in mental hospitals for depression.

Cindy got a restraining order, but it didn't help. He'd break into her home when she wasn't there and he'd call her 30 times in day. She couldn't go jogging and she showered with her cell phone handy out of fear of another home invasion.

Her co-workers walked her to and from her car and when she visited her parents in Barrington, she pulled into their garage and made sure the door was closed before she got out of her car, said Barbara Bischof.

It's a story Rebecca Darr hears all the time. One in every four woman will be abused in her lifetime, said Darr, executive director of WINGS in Cook County.

"Cindy's Law" saves lives all the time, Darr said. For example, police were able to stop a Kane County man from killing his girlfriend after they tracked him down via his GPS bracelet, she said. The device warns police and the victim if the person goes near the victim's home or work.

"Cindy asked the judge to make her abuser wear a GPS bracelet but the judge was in a bind because Illinois didn't allow for that level of protection yet," Darr said. "It's such an important added layer of protection."