

SmokeSignals

December 2021

Newsletter of KaitKares, Inc. - a Fire Safety Advocacy Nonprofit

In July of 2019, Kaitlyn Denson and Joseph Tarin were lost in a tragic apartment fire in Austin. KaitKares began out of love for Kaitlyn and Joseph, to keep their memory alive, and to ensure fire safety for everyone through education and law reform.

We want to wish all of our supporters a Happy Holiday season! In this newsletter we will be sharing some fire safety tips so that you can spend the holidays focused on friends and family, not worrying about a potential fire crashing the party.

Unfortunately, fire safety is something that isn't at the front of peoples' minds until something tragic happens. We hope that this holiday season you think of Kaitlyn and Joseph and decide to take a few minutes to ensure that your family is celebrating safely.

FAST FACTS

01

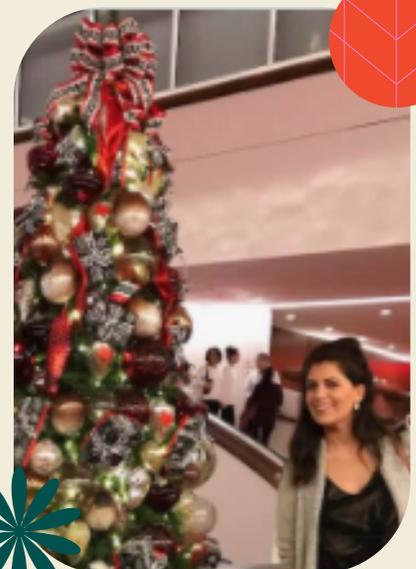
MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF HOME DECORATION FIRES ARE STARTED BY CANDLES.

Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn as well as children and pets. Blow out lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed.

02

MORE THAN TWO OF EVERY FIVE DECORATION FIRES HAPPEN BECAUSE DECORATIONS ARE PLACED TOO CLOSE TO A HEAT SOURCE.

Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.



From everyone at KaitKares, thank you for your support.

A Letter from the President...

As 2021 comes to a close and I reflect on this past year, two words come to mind: humility and gratefulness. This past year has been challenging for everyone to say the least. Whether directly or indirectly affected by Covid, it touched each and every one of us in some way, shape, or form. A silver lining was that the pandemic gave us an opportunity to take a step back and really process how blessed we are by spending quality time with the people we love, cherishing the memories of the loved ones we've lost, and re-evaluating our lives and where we see ourselves moving forward.

I had the opportunity to speak at the Fire Sprinkler Contractors Association of Texas in League City in June and recently at the Annual Texas Fire Marshals' Conference in San Marcus.

I am proud and honored to have met and made some unique connections with like-minded organizations and people. Fortunately, out of tragedy can come positive change. To know there are people and organizations that share the same mission as KaitKares and being able to partner with them is truly humbling.

Thank you Cindy Giedraitis and NFSA for being our initial point of contact and giving us this opportunity to meet such amazing people and the chance to tell our story. Thank you to DJ, Karl and Zach Sutterfield ([Brighter Than the Fire](#)) for sharing your journey, and to all our followers who have continually supported us. We have a long journey ahead, but I am confident we will achieve our goals by

spreading the message of fire safety, and moving forward with legislature reform. I see a future where all multiplex dwellings will be retrofitted with sprinklers which will allow that extra time for a safe escape in the event of a fire.

We at KaitKares wish you and yours a blessed Holiday season and a reminder to hug your loved ones a little tighter and longer, and never to take for granted the precious minutes we get to spend with them.

Look forward to our fundraisers next year, we are planning some exciting events!

Stay safe, have a plan, and God bless!

Kim



Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season!

Part of Kim's Speech from the Texas Fire Marshals Conference

My name is Kim Denson and I am the founder and president of KaitKares, our non profit for Fire Safety Advocacy and Retrofit legislation. I live in Houston, and I have been a registered nurse since 1985.

My daughter Kaitlyn was just 26 yrs old when she passed away in an apartment fire in ATX 7/15/2019 along with her friend Joseph Tarin. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would find myself here.

It was Monday, July 15th 2019, at 3:00 in the afternoon when I received a call from my daughter's manager and friend telling me that Kaitlyn did not show up for her shift at Snooze that morning. I had just spoken to her the previous evening around 10pm, she was excited to be coming home to Houston after work that Monday to pick up her car. Not showing up for work was totally out of character for her.

Her manager told me not to worry, they would run by her apartment to check on her. I immediately sent a text and called, but it went straight to voicemail.

Worry and panic started to set in. About 20 minutes later, I received a phone call from a Houston police officer, who stated he was at my home.

He asked if I had a daughter named Kaitlyn. I said yes, and for a brief moment, I laughed and thought to myself..... darn it, she got in trouble and was arrested. That is why she didn't show up for work. Not sure why I thought that, Kaitlyn has never been in trouble or arrested.

He proceeded to tell me over the phone that there had been a fire at her apartment at 430 am, and her and her friend did not survive. I vaguely remember screaming, and sliding down the wall to the floor. My initial response was to flee. My co workers tried to stop me, but I just wanted to run away. Fight or flight response.

Driving home was a blur. I was crying with my hands on the steering wheel repeating over and over, "what do I do, what do I do?"

My phone was blowing up with calls from the ME, Homicide Detective Fugat, Chief Reardon, and the Red Cross.

When I got home, my ex husband and my son and I just stood in my living sobbing and hugging each other in disbelief.

My friends were outside waiting in 90 degree weather on my lawn, but for some reason, I just couldn't open the door and let them in.

Eventually they texted me, saying sooner or later, I was going to have to open the door. We all were in shock.

They drove us to Austin, and I was standing outside her apartment at dawn. I was physically ill and wanted to vomit when I saw what was left of the charred remains. I had just spent the weekend there with her, never thinking anything like this could happen. All I could say was, "WHY???? And HOW???"

As the days went by, and I read and learned more about apartment and home fires, I vowed to make this my mission, to prevent this from happening to anyone else.

As we sat around my kitchen table planning my daughter's funeral, my friend's and I decided to come up with some sort of plan to ensure this would not happen again, and that Kaitlyn and Joseph did not die in vain. We started a non-profit named KaitKares. Our mission would be Fire Safety Advocacy and Retrofit Legislation.



A Message From Lindsey Smith....

Kaitlyn and I shared an exceptional love for adventure in our 13 years of friendship. A frequent yearning to discover the unknown, voyagers you might say. We would seek to travel somewhere warm, buy the ticket, and shortly after we would find ourselves in a Guatemalan courtyard, sipping mezcal in a centuries-old speakeasy. We collectively always knew when it was time to get out there and explore, even when we lived thousands of miles apart. Another interest Kaitlyn and I shared was an affinity for fried chicken.

We decided on our top five favorites as follows, the first originating in one of our favorite travel destinations, Antigua, Guatemala.

1. Pollo Campero
2. Gus's
3. Hattie B's Hot Chicken Atlanta
4. Popeyes
5. Random Chicken Stand Attached to Baton Rouge Greyhound Station

As an ode to traveling the world, one drumstick at a time, I decided to forever mark myself with them in her honor. I love sharing the story when people ask "Are those drumsticks on your arm?"

Cheers to many more drumsticks and many more adventures!



THANK YOU
WILLOW
WATERHOLE
MUSICFEST!



@kaythares



Willow Waterhole MusicFest 2021

The day could not have been more perfect for KaitKares to represent at one of the largest and most popular events in the Westbury area. We were able to share our story and more importantly fire safety education tips.

The "Spin the Wheel" activity was a favorite among the kids and there was a good balance of correct and incorrect answers allowing for educational opportunities (and award out our Halloween treats).

We secured over 50 fire plan pledges from children and adults with our armbands and we're able to obtain over 100 signatures on our petition, Public Housing Fire Safety Act - To Save a Life ([find it here](#)).

We are so grateful to everyone who came by the booth to learn more about fire safety as well as donate to the cause. We can't wait for next year's event!

Fire Prevention Week Recap

October 3-9, 2021

TIP 1: HAVE WORKING SMOKE ALARMS

TIP 2: EVERY ROOM NEEDS TWO WAYS OUT

TIP 3: PRACTICE YOUR FIRE ESCAPE PLAN AT LEAST TWICE PER YEAR

TIP 4: IF YOU HEAR A SMOKE ALARM, GET OUT!

TIP 5: HAVE A MEETING PLACE OUTSIDE

"Life Choices in 60 Seconds"

For Fire Prevention Week 2021, James Golinveaux, the President and CEO of the Viking Sprinklers Group and his wife Pamela shared that their home recently burned down.

In 60 seconds, they had to make a lot of decisions and learned that fire is faster and more powerful than we are.

On their outdoor covered patio, a lithium ion battery was left charging overnight as they were doing some work outside. This battery caught on fire as they were sleeping. At 10:28 pm, they received a security alert via their home security system detecting movement. However, this did not wake them up as they are used to deer and other animals setting off the motion sensors.

At 10:32, the sound of fire woke James up. He says that this is where he made his first mistake- opening the bedroom door to walk into

the foyer to see the fire. From that point, alarms started triggering as windows were broken by the fire, finally triggering all the smoke alarms in the home.

James rushed to evacuate Pamela and yelled for his brother who was upstairs visiting from Idaho.

The second mistake that James says he made was running toward the fire to get out of his house. Within 60 seconds of hearing the fire, James, his wife, and his brother escaped the house fire safely.

In James and Pamela's video speaking about the event (found [here](#)), James says, "Instead of going out of the windows which would have been more logical, we went towards the fire and I can't tell you how I made those decisions in those split

seconds, but I made those decisions. They weren't the correct decisions to go towards the fire. We should've gone out the bedroom window. But in the split second, every plan that you make it can be subject to change- they're life decisions that you make very quickly."

James said that not retrofitting this home with fire sprinklers, not having a good plan of evacuation in place, heading toward the fire, trying to fight the fire with a garden hose, and making sure his wife exited the house instead of waiting for his brother were all mistakes made.

James expressed that depending on rational thought during a fire isn't reliable- practicing your fire safety plan is key.



Get Involved

01

SIGN THE KAITKARES PETITION [HERE](#)

This petition is to ask for your support in passing the Public Housing Fire Safety Act - an act that would create a program to provide support to public housing authorities in order to retrofit older apartment buildings with automated sprinkler systems. The Federal Fire Safety Act of 1992 required the installation of sprinklers in all new government owned buildings however, there are still thousands of public housing apartment buildings built prior to this act that do not require updates on fire safety and have been the source of preventable fatalities in instances of fires. This is an opportunity to make sure all Americans and their families dependent on public housing have a safe place to live.

02

DONATE TO KAITKARES

Scan the QR code below (or click [here](#)) and choose whether you'd like to make a one-time donation or a recurring monthly donation. All proceeds help KaitKares educate the public on fire safety, educate legislators regarding gaps in current fire safety legislation as it pertains to building safety and personal safety, and advocate for change.



03

FOLLOW US!

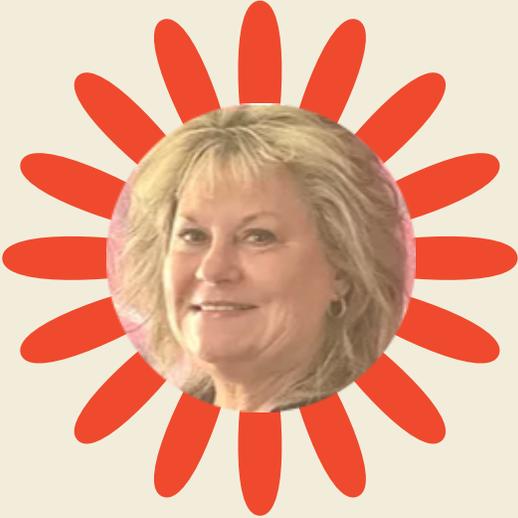
Follow us on instagram @kaitkares to stay up the date on everything we are up to. Also, join our emailing list on our website at www.kaitkares.org

04

MAKE SURE THAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY HAVE A FIRE SAFETY PLAN

In the event of a fire, we want to ensure that everyone has a fire safety plan for their household. One of the biggest ways that you can support our mission is to share the KaitKares story with your family and friends and take active steps to ensure that you and your loved ones would be safe in the event of a fire.

KaitKares Team



Happy Holidays to you
and yours from the
KaitKares team!