

# Choking Game Awareness ~ The DB Foundation

December 2010

## Inside this issue:

Educational Update	2
CDC Report	3
Why We Need More	4
Congressional Briefings	4
Inside Story	4
Join Us Online	5
Highlights of 2010	5
Upcoming for 2011	5
Meet DBF's Board of Directors	6
Meet DBF's Advisors	7
Contact us	7
In Memory of	8

### **In Memory of Every child lost and in memory of Tina Dyer Smith**

*Our community has lost an irreplaceable members this year.*

*Tina Dyer Smith was the mother of choking Game victim William 'Tyler' Matherly. Tina was tragically murdered in her home on December 3rd 2010. Surviving her is her daughter, and Tyler's sister Brittany. Our thoughts, hearts and prayers go out to all of Tina's family. She will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by many.*

## Welcome to The DB Foundation's Year End Newsletter

It has been a busy and productive year in "Choking Game" awareness and education. We would like to thank every parent, family, volunteer and citizen who has joined forces with us in an effort to bring information of the dangers of the choking game into every community. We look forward to 2011 as we continue to gain ground and reach more professionals, communities and maybe even a national platform for required education of this risky youth behavior.

## **A Note from Dale Galloway, DBF Chairman For Parents Who Have Lost Children to "The Choking Game"**

The trauma of losing a child is universal among those families affected.

However, everything else about the event can be unique to the family it affects. For all of us who have lost a child to the choking game, we struggle with the trauma of our loss. But our backgrounds are different, our children were not the same, and the circumstances surrounding the deaths of our children are not the same. Even the way we react to the loss can, and probably should be, completely different. I believe, however, that I can safely add that none of us want other families to experience the same loss. We want to prevent children from dying by the choking game.

Speaking strictly for myself, I do not believe that there is any resource that I would not at least consider as I wage my own war against this activity. (cont on Page 3)



## **501c3 Charitable Organization Status**

The DB Foundation will be under going a major positive change in 2011. We will be awaiting the acceptance of 501 c3 status appointed by the IRS. This status will officially make us a Charitable Organization and will allow us to seek out and apply for grants and additional funding. An increase in funding will enable us to increase the opportunity to raise awareness and provide education for the dangers of the choking game.

Part of this process is to incorporate a Board of Trustees. We are so thrilled to introduce the Board, many members have been involved with DBF from the very beginning.

Meet the Board—see page 4

## Educational Efforts in 2010

To date, 2010 is the year with the greatest requests for information. This includes thousands of "Risky Behavior" DVDs mailed out across the US and to several other countries by Dale and Michele Galloway. Hundreds of general information inquiries responded to by DBF to citizens, teachers, school nurses, law enforcement and the media. We have also released a video on YouTube called "Choking Game ~ Wake Up!" in hopes of combating the frenzy of videos posted of youth engaged in this behavior.

### "Dangers of the Choking Game" Presentations

#### Thank you to the following Presenters:

Erik Baaske, Judy Doyle, Barb Dreyer & Toni Jensen, Dale & Michele Galloway, Off. Erik Heller, Dawn Kuhn & Chris Kuhn, Kate Leonardi and Off. Cliff O'Quinn for making the presentations happen in their communities.

A Sample of 2010 PRESENTATION VENUES
Beasley Middle School
Crescent City H.S.
Palatka H.S.
QI Price Middle School
Interlachen Middle School
Jenkins Middle School
Dunwoody P.D.
Oriole Park, Chicago
Norwood, Chicago
Pilgrim Lutheran School
Belding Elementary School - Chicago
Farmington 8th Grade Prevention Day
V.I.T Prevention Week Table Grove, IL
Gardner Middle School
Braircliff Manor
Pius X High School
Hilton Head Prep
Community Bible Church Christian Academy
Homeschool Association Dad's Fellowship
Conroe Juvenile Justice- probation officers
Brazoria County Juvenile Justice- counselors
Keller Middle School- staff
Garfield Elementary- parents
Keller Middle School- parents
Round Rock ISD- parents and staff
Mae Smith Elementary-parents
Beverly Hills Intermediate- staff
ROWVA Jr. High School
Pius X High School

Presentations have directly touched more than 20,000 people.

These school districts, groups and other organizations approached DBF asking for a presentation or were contacted directly by the presenter who offered to share the material. The list on the left doesn't include every parent family member, physician, school counselor, etc shared the material with a child or another adult — those contacts are invaluable and countless. The message is getting out there, person by person, group by group.

We are so proud to be able to offer presentations to parents and students and information everyone can share. We wouldn't be able to do it without all of our Presenters and volunteers. Thank You and give yourselves a round of applause - lives are being saved

The Presenters process has been changed this year to be more consistent. Each presenter is using the same basic powerpoint with specific slides altered for their own personal story.

Requests for our presenters is at an all time high. We think schools are beginning to see the importance of prevention assemblies as opposed to those in reaction to an incident in the community

**Presenter Training**

**January 30th at 4PM.  
Via Phone conference**

This is intentionally a weekend day. We know you're busy and we hope to include everyone who would like to join us as a presenter.

**More Info:  
Contact Kate  
Kate@TheDBFoundation.com**

## For Parents Who Have Lost Children to “The Choking Game” (cont.)

In the three years since we lost our son, Connor, we have tried many methods and messages to communicate with anyone who would listen in a spirit of awareness and prevention. One resource that we have been glad to have is the CDC report on deaths attributed to the choking game, released in February, 2008. (cont PG2)

The strength of the report is not whether or not it accurately reflects the reality of all individual cases or the scope of the problem, including an accurate count of the deaths. The strength lies in the fact the report represents an effort by a governmental agency to highlight the problem. This will always be needed by us, the grieving parents, to bolster our efforts and give credibility to our voice. There is something, however, we must all keep in mind when we see the report referenced in media reports throughout the country.

### CDC Report

The report is based on an examination of media reports done by Dr. Robin Toblin, a post doctorate fellow at the CDC. Dr. Toblin is no longer at the CDC. Dr. Toblin was assisted by CDC staff while completing the project. Dr. Julie Gilchrist, who is an employee of the CDC, worked on the project and is often a media contact point for the information contained in the study.

I have been given every reason to believe that the CDC remains concerned about “our” issue. Their concern was the reason for their support of Dr. Toblin’s project. However, the study has not been repeated for a number of reasons including shortages of personnel and funding, the lack of an accurate data source on fatalities, and the fact that media reports are not a systematic way to collect fatality data. Parents, especially parents who are new to the issue, need to be aware of this problem. Parents need to know that the numbers quoted frequently from the original study do not represent any updates. In an effort to provide more rigorous data on participation this dangerous activity, CDC is collaborating with state health departments who conduct annual Youth Risk Behavior Surveys. Specifically, in 2008 the state of Oregon included questions related to knowledge of and participation in the choking game. The first report on this data was published in the MMWR in January 2010 (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5901a1.htm>). While it doesn’t capture deaths (which are scientifically rare events), it does highlight that almost 6% (or 1 in 17 children) has participated in this dangerous activity themselves. Results from the 2009 survey are in process.

CDC is collaborating  
with state health  
departments who  
conduct annual  
Youth Risk Behavior  
Surveys.

in

As a parent who has lost a child to the choking game, I would like to see more research done. My experience as an advocate for child and adolescent health has shown me the great value of the CDC report, even in its incomplete state. While we can’t identify the true number of deaths due to the choking game at this time, CDC is working to identify risk profiles so that children who might be participating can be identified and educated. Ultimately, I am writing this as a call to action for parents who have lost a child to the choking game and want to do more to raise awareness and contribute to prevention efforts. I believe there are steps we can take as parents to help make the expansion of the earlier efforts by Dr. Toblin and the CDC a reality.

Cont on Page 4



### Why We Need More

As parents, we need the CDC as a cooperative partner while dealing with the issues we face. I see the data and opinions of the CDC as pivotal to our efforts. In my opinion, the information gathered can help us deal with issues such as the following:

- No ICD subcode for choking game deaths which affects how deaths are recorded internationally.
- Education for law enforcement and medical examiners assisting in the recognition of choking game cases
- Training for healthcare providers and educators on prevention strategies
- Information for parents on prevention strategies
- Goals and strategies for policy makers on best ways to address risky adolescent behaviors, including the choking game

### Congressional Briefings

The following is a description of how I believe we as parents can assist the CDC. I encourage all parents to contact their Senators and Representatives in Washington to request a briefing by the CDC on our issue. Do not assume that your elected officials know about the issues we and the CDC face. Also, we cannot assume that these briefings are just naturally taking place. Because of lobbying rules, the request for briefing must be made by the office of the elected official and then the CDC honors the request. Our role as parents can be to contact the office of the elected official and ask that they call the CDC and request to be briefed on our issue. This briefing will most likely take place between a staff member of the political office and a researcher at the CDC, such as Dr. Gilchrist.

We have arranged two of these briefings to date. In our experiences, we have found it necessary to voice exactly what the issues are and how we feel the briefing can help us in our mission. Specifically, I believe there are three areas where Congressional support could potentially mean the most.

Congress should support the CDC and Department of Health and Human Services in a process of requesting an ICD subcode change by the World Health Organization to include choking game as a cause of death.

Congress should support the expansion of the YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) to be the vehicle for gathering data on student attitudes and behavior regarding the choking game. Congress should also work to make the YRBS more affordable for states.

Congress should support the DASH model of health education developed by the CDC to be an integral part of the reauthorization of ESEA. I also believe this would support the “whole child” movement in education.

*“Our role as parents can be to contact the office of the elected official and ask that they call the CDC and request to be briefed on our issue.”*

Cont on Page 5



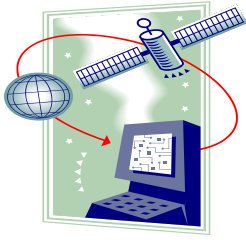
### “Wear Your Awareness 2010” Testimonial

“Chris was sitting at the cabana at a resort in Orlando when we were on vacation. A guy came up behind him to place his order and at first made a joke about it. He asked Chris “The choking game? What kind of fun game is that?” That is when Chris explained it and told him of Cody. The guy was shocked. He couldn't stop apologizing and asked Chris for more information on it. So Chris told him and the guy told Chris that he was going back to talk to his kids and going to tell other family members when he got back to his home state.”

~ Dawn & Chris Kuhn

## Bereaved Families - Find support online

### “Grief Support for Families suffering after the Choking Game”



Our group on Facebook bridging the demographic gap between parents and bringing us closer to one another in our time of need. The group is open to parents and immediate family members and close friends. Newly bereaved are encouraged to participate and work through grief as those further out also will be

sharing the venture of their own grief journey. This blend offers suggestions, validation, acceptance and most of all comfort. We all grieve differently but we are all grieving a very similar loss.

Here’s the link: [http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/home.php?sk=group\\_175526962467803&ap=1](http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/home.php?sk=group_175526962467803&ap=1)

You will need a Facebook account to participate in the group.

## For Parents Who Have Lost Children (cont.)

### Conclusion

Like most of you, I have come to the realization that one act does not necessarily save the life of a child or spare a family from its worst nightmare. As frustrating as this fact may be, I believe we must keep fighting the good fight and use every resource we can find. In this fight, we have found that the CDC is not the enemy. In fact, the CDC is one of the few allies with real potential and their involvement gives our efforts immediate credibility. Elected officials are not the enemy either. The ones we have worked with have been sympathetic and have shared our frustration over processes inhibiting their desire to know more and do more. Who is the enemy?

- Time
- People who endorse risky behavior
- People who are critical of our dead children and call them names
- People not willing to admit the existence of the activity or are in denial about the possibility of it happening in their area
- Our own fragility and the difficulty of maintaining focus

If you are interested in learning more about arranging the congressional briefings, please contact me at the email provided below. I also welcome any thoughts or comments on the opinions I have given.

Dale Galloway

[dgalloway@nationalpeace.org](mailto:dgalloway@nationalpeace.org)

## Highlights of 2010

North Carolina Medical Journal

[Parents' Roles in Improving the Health of Adolescents](#) Dale Galloway *N C Med J.* 2010;71(4):383-385.[PDF](#)

[“Choking Game ~ Wake Up!”](#) PSA

From the CDC January 15, 2010

[“Choking Game” Awareness and Participation Among 8th Graders — Oregon, 2008](#)

## Upcoming in 2011

We will be partnering with FCD a long standing, respected organization.

“FCD Educational Services is the leading international nonprofit provider of K-12 on-site drug education and substance abuse prevention services for schools across the United States and around the world.”

~~~~~  
**Planning has begun for a US National Conference on The Choking Game.** More details in the future as it become confirmed!

Keep checking the website!

~~~~~  
**“Wear Your Awareness 2011”**

New gear featured this year will include a TOTE BAG!

This promotion begins in February and orders will be taken through March 1st for the first shipment.



### Kate Leonardi - Founding Director



Kate Leonardi has been with The DB Foundation since its creation in 2006. She was the single parent of her only child, Dylan (11 yrs old) when he passed away and she first learned of The Choking Game. Kate's role with The DB Foundation has changed as the foundation has grown through the years. Currently, Kate is involved in providing educational speaking engagements nationwide, the media contact person, and speaks at length with newly bereaved parents. Kate also contributes to research and Foundation development, maintenance of information on the website and member coordination. She currently is a stay-at-home mom residing in Northeast Florida with her husband, 2 children; Matthew (4) and Amy (2), and their dog Mack.

---

### Dale Galloway - Chair / Michele Galloway - Treasurer



Dale and Michele Galloway became a part of the DB Foundation in 2007 after the loss of their son, Connor. As career educators they realized that the lack of clear and comprehensive education about the choking game played a role in the loss of their child. Since Connor's death they have dedicated their time and efforts to issues involving health education reform. They have been guest speakers at schools and community organizations, advocates for legislative changes in North Carolina and nationally, and have provided a DVD in cooperation with Asheville City Schools that addresses many examples of adolescent risky behaviors and their relevance to health education reform.

---

### Carlos Flores, RN - Board Member

Carlos Flores, RN, is the Trauma Coordinator for Children's Hospital Central California in Madera, California. Carlos enjoys the blessings of family life with his bride and their four sons. He has experienced a 23 year career as a pediatric nurse focused on Pediatric Emergency and Trauma Care. As part of his position with Children's Hospital, Carlos has been developed a wide spectrum injury prevention and professional outreach program in Central California which includes presentations on the Choking Game. Since 2003, his projects have reached over 40,000 kids, parents, and professional groups averaging 70 venues per year. With the help of local community groups such as Kiwanis, he offers these services at no cost to the community. His advocacy for child safety includes television & radio exposure, community partnerships, legislative education, and a vast network of community groups involved in the welfare of children.

---

### Officer Cliff O'Quinn - Board Member



Officer Cliff O'Quinn is 55 years old, married and the father of three. He started his police career in 1977 and has 33 years of experience and has worked in all aspects of law enforcement.

Officer O'Quinn became involved with the Choking Game in 2007 after taking training at Sam Houston State University. Over the past three years he has done over 80 presentations to all age groups. He has been listed as a presenter on the D.B. Foundation since 2007. He has investigated numerous cases of students engaging in the deadly act of "The Choking Game". Some of the cases were in the class room during class instruction.

Officer O'Quinn has earned all five state certifications offered by, The Texas Law Enforcement Commission for Officer Standards and Education. He has 8 years in the education field working with all ages of juveniles and young adults. He was featured on FOX News Network hosted by Carolyn Canville in a three part series on the dangers of "The Choking Game".

---

---

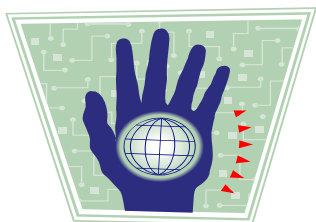
**Dr. Trish Russell**

Trish (Patricia Russell) is a family practice physician in Washington State. She learned of the choking game when her son Colin died in September, 2005. She coauthored the first CDC report on the choking game (MMWR Feb 15, 2008) and has collaborated with other practicing physicians, nurses and medical examiners in the US and Canada on a number of projects aimed at increasing awareness of pass out activities in the medical and public health communities. An information letter written by Dr Russell for physicians, school nurses and other health care providers is available in the printable materials section of the DB Foundation web site.

---

**Stephanie B. Small, M.A., M.F.C.T.**

Stephanie is a Licensed Marriage, Family, and Child Psychotherapist who specializes in working with children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in Los Angeles, CA. Areas of expertise are grief, trauma, relationships, working with individuals who chronically or terminally ill. Stephanie brings to DBF her extensive knowledge of children and youth risk behaviors along with an understanding of workings of the teen thought process and how it relates to those risks.



**We are always looking  
for volunteers.**

---

**Want to Lend a Hand at DBF?**

We are SEEKING AN EVENT CO-ORDINATOR

Currently we are seeking someone with an event coordinator background/ expertise to help us plan a National Conference. If you feel you fit this criteria and are interested, please contact Kate via email [Kate@thedbfoundation.com](mailto:Kate@thedbfoundation.com) to discuss the details. We aim to have this position filled by March 2010.

---

The DB Foundation  
PO BOX 351787  
Palm Coast, FL 32135

Main Phone: 904-315-2222

E-mail: [support@TheDBFoundation.com](mailto:support@TheDBFoundation.com)



**Together, we are making a difference  
and saving lives!**

---

**Our Philosophy:**

The DB Foundation operates on a 'community based and community driven' philosophy. As a community, we each bring to the table our own personal, often tragic, experience and knowledge. It is each one of these voices, coming together creating our passion and united front as we gain ground on reaching other communities for the sake of education and preventative measures against dangerous adolescent behaviors. Not a single voice is ever turned away from wishing to help join our forces.

**The Mission of The DB Foundation:**

Our mission is to establish and implement awareness and educational programs regarding dangerous adolescent behaviors to parents, schools, law enforcement, Health Care Professionals and children for the purpose of injury prevention and risk reduction. This will be achieved through changing legislation, providing seminars, school assemblies, community presentations, a website presence, an availability to the media and a quarterly newsletter and providing, free of charge, educational materials such as brochures to those seeking this information.

**We are more driven then ever to bring awareness to every parent & child.  
We vow to never stop, on behalf of the killed and injured.**

12M	Darryl	Jan	12	Palatka	FL	USA
14M	Timothy "TJ"	Jan	17	Virginia Beach	VA	USA
12M	Name Private	Jan	21	Tecumseh	OK	USA
15M	Skyler	Jan	28	Columbus	GA	USA
20F	Andrea	Jan	30	Denver	CO	USA
15M	Alexander	Feb	11	Niles	MI	USA
10M	Taylor	Feb	25	Talladega	AL	USA
15M	Christopher	Feb	26	Ottumwa	IA	USA
14M	Michael	March	9	Wallace	SC	USA
11M	Drew	March	12	David City	NE	USA
22F	Amanda	March	17		TN	USA
12M	Name Private	March	17	Tauranga		New Zealand
16M	Danny	March	23	Toronto		CANADA
9M	Isaiah	March	31	Aurora	CO	USA
14M	Private	March	31	Albuquerque	NM	USA
M	Lucas	April	1	Ionia	MI	USA
19M	Abston	April	11	Olive Branch	MS	USA
13F	Name Private	April	15	St. Paul	MN	USA
14M	Kyle	April	19	Elk Grove	CA	USA
19M	Jimmy	April	19	Crystal Lake	IL	USA
12M	Erik	April	21	Santa Monica	CA	USA
13F	Name Private	April	21	St. Louis	MO	USA
15M	Name Private	April	30	Crystal Lake	IL	USA
13M	Rhael	May	6	Prior Lake	MN	USA
13M	Name Private	May	8	Redding	CA	USA
12M	Joshua	May	9	Laurel	MS	USA
12M	'AJ'	May	14	Williamstown	NJ	USA
17M	Carl "Trey"	June	25	Lathrop	CA	USA
14F	Leilani	June	25	House Springs	MO	USA
13F	Laurian	July	4	Beaufort	SC	USA
14F	Angie	July	31	Chicago	IL	USA
8M	Jacob	Aug	10	Tooele	UT	USA
14M	Jaime Lynwood	Aug	11	Preston	MD	USA
13M	Harry	Aug	15	Terling		England
15M	Brendan	Aug	17	Chicago	IL	USA
15F	Rebekah	Aug	31	Chicago	IL	USA
16M	Zach	Aug	31	Madison County	IN	USA
16M	Justin	Sept	2	Auburn	CA	USA
16F	Name Private	Sept	15	Excelsior	MN	USA
13M	Name Private	Sept	28	Lillington	NC	USA
14M	Izaac d'Aquin	Oct	2	Miami	FL	USA
14M	Name Private	Oct	24	Preston	MD	USA
13F	Gabrielle	Nov	13	Wheat Ridge	CO	USA
M	Spencer	Dec	4	Lexington	SC	USA