

Dad Took Kids to Theme Park Day Before Killing Whole Family

Mom Megan Short was planning new life away from her abusive ex

**“NOW MOMMY, YOU’RE FREE:”
14-YEAR-OLD GIRL FACING MURDER
CHARGE FOR KILLING ALLEGEDLY ABUSIVE
FATHER**

2 Shots Fired After Man Challenges Daughter to 'Duel'

Dad was booked for child abuse, among other charges

These are just a few of recent headlines of news stories about children who are or were living in homes with domestic violence. Studies, specifically the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, show how witnessing violence in the home affects children. It affects them while they are experiencing it and throughout their lifetimes.

Twenty-four years ago, I was teaching middle school and I had an 8th grade student in my Language Arts class that I had also taught in 2nd grade at one of the feeder elementary schools. He had struggled in elementary school, missed a lot of school, and acted out when he was there. His father had been physically and emotionally violent at home. He had abused not only the mother, but my student, his siblings and their pets.

By the time I met him again in middle school, things had changed. His parents had divorced and his Dad was no longer in the picture. Mom had gone back to school, and had a good job. She was respected at work, in her church, and in the community. He and his mom had set goals together; with him graduating and going to college as a priority. He knew he needed good grades and hopefully lots of scholarships. He was a popular student, now excelling in his grades and in athletics. Mom began dating again and things seemed to go well for a while with her new boyfriend.

However, the boyfriend had different ideas, and brought drugs into the home, and became physically violent with the mom and verbally abusive to the children. My student journaled about how this was affecting him. It brought back memories of life with his dad, seeing how younger siblings had become fearful, how mom was depressed and had been warned for missing lots of work. Eventually his mother kicked out the boyfriend. We talked a few times after school; I remember giving him information for one of the domestic violence programs in town where a friend worked.

Then one evening came the phone call from my principal. My student had been stabbed 43 times protecting his mother and siblings from the ex-boyfriend. The ex had broken into the house and was waiting in the kitchen for the family when they returned from a middle school basketball game. My student had scored the winning basket. The younger children were able to hide in the house, fearful of leaving their mom. My student ran to the kitchen when he heard screams. His mom had been repeatedly stabbed.

Local media had headlines about my student and his family just like those above. My student died; his mother had a long recovery, physically and mentally. His family will never be the same. Neither will I. As adults, we are supposed to protect the children. We have a responsibility to them, whether they are our children or not. If you know or even suspect abuse/violence is going on in a child's home, don't wait to help. That child may someday be in one of those headlines. -Diane Mayfield