



As Sarah sat on the witness stand in the courtroom, she was trembling violently but not from fear; she was trembling with the adrenaline that raced through her petite 10-year-old body. She actually was relieved that the day had finally come, and she was going to be able to tell the truth about what had happened when she stayed with her great-uncle on weekends that her mom was working. As the lawyer smiled and walked towards Sarah on the witness stand, facility dog Wilson snuggled even closer to Sarah, and she felt him begin to snore softly at her feet.

Two years earlier, when Sarah's mom took a new job working weekends at the hospital, Sarah was almost 8 and not old enough to stay alone at home. Her mom checked out weekend babysitting services for Sarah, but the cost was too much to consider with a budget that was already too tight. With limited resources and no immediate family nearby, Sarah's mom turned to her uncle for help – and he reluctantly agreed. The first day when Sarah's mom left her and headed to work, her great-uncle told her that she had to “help out” with odd tasks. For several weeks, she did menial jobs and even napped some in a back bedroom, out of boredom. The late Sunday afternoon when Sarah awoke from a nap to find her uncle standing over her, watching her, was the beginning of what her uncle called their “special time.” He threatened Sarah about telling her mom, claiming her mom would not believe her.

When Sarah fought past her fear and told her mom about what her great uncle was doing, the response was not what she expected. Her mom told her she knew Sarah was fabricating things to get out of helping her uncle – she even punished Sarah for lying about an adult. Sarah continued going to her uncle's house for three more months until she again told her friend's older sister who asked about the bruising on her upper arm.

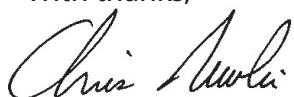
As she sat in the courtroom and began to answer the lawyer's questions, she remembered all of the grownups that had believed her, who had understood her fear and even her anger. Those same grownups had found a safe place for Sarah to live until she could move back to Kentucky to live with her dad, and they had also helped her to work through the fear that people would know what she had been through just by looking at her and helped her manage her anger towards both her great-uncle and her mom.

The grownups that helped Sarah were all members of the NCAC's multi-disciplinary team and Sarah considered them friends – they were in the courtroom that day, supporting Sarah with their presence, reminding her that she was safe, and she was strong. Wilson's head on her feet helped to anchor Sarah as she looked at the lawyer and finally told her truth, the whole truth.

When you support children in our community, like Sarah, you give them the opportunity to regain their childhood, to find their hope and happiness again. The memory of child abuse is a heavy burden for a child to bear, but with therapy and support to process their trauma, that burden is eased – you lighten their heart. No child or family ever pays for any services at the National Children's Advocacy Center – and you make that possible.

Will you consider a gift of \$150 or more in honor of all of the "Sarahs" in our community? Help Sarah and other little boys and girls just like her. They need you today.

With thanks,



Chris Newlin, MS LPC
Executive Director

P.S. This holiday season, please keep our community's children in your thoughts, as we all strive to make their world just a little brighter. Your support makes that possible.

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