

Safety video honoring SIUE students announced on fourth anniversary of fatal fire

April 18 2016 11:10 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – Four years after the tragic loss of two **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE)** students in an off-campus apartment fire, the victims' families and attorneys are releasing a fire safety video to more than 200 universities nationwide. **Lauren Petersen and Lacy Siddall** lost their lives in an off-campus apartment fire on April 22, 2012.

The Petersen and Siddall families and their attorneys, Ted Gianaris, of Simmons Hanly Conroy, and Thomas Long, of Sandberg Phoenix & Von Gontard P.C., set out to honor the memories of Lauren and Lacy and create awareness to protect students and prevent future incidents by funding and producing the video. The families and attorneys partnered with SIUE University Housing, Residence Life Cinema and Switch to produce the first-of-its-kind video.

“If this video can prevent other families from experiencing the unspeakable grief of losing cherished loved ones to a preventable danger like an off-campus apartment fire, then that will allow some good to come from tragedy. We hope Lacy and Lauren’s story will educate landlords, students and even parents about fire prevention for college students living in both on- and off-campus housing,” the families said in a joint statement.

The video features the girls’ mutual friend Taylor Scott talking about how much she misses them. The video underscores the dangers of campus fires by capturing slow-motion footage shot at 2,000 frames per second using the Phantom Flex4K camera. It also includes footage from the aftermath of the fire that claimed the women’s lives. The families hope including the real-life footage will underscore the importance of fire safety for thousands of student viewers.

“We set out to speak specifically to college students, and I believe the video accomplishes that in a dramatic and hard-hitting way,” said Mike Schultz, Director of University Housing at SIUE.

Lauren Petersen was a 19-year-old student in the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences. Lacy Siddall was 21 years old and studying speech-language pathology in the SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior. The two girls were childhood friends who grew up in Bethalto, Ill., and were inseparable. No matter if they were going to church, playing tennis or attending college.

“Growing up, they did everything together,” Rex Petersen, Lauren’s father remembered. “They lived together and they died together.”

This April marks the 4-year anniversary of the fire. For the two years afterward, the families and attorneys fought a large insurance company. The lawsuit centered on improperly placed smoke and fire alarms. Investigation during litigation ruled out the initial theory the fire was caused by a laptop. The families and their attorneys believe hard fought lawsuits can result in making children and families safer. The families and the attorneys decided to use a portion of the settlement to spread awareness of the need to educate college students and parents about fire safety.

“As each young person views this critical safety video the tragedy that befell Lacy and Lauren will transform itself into a life-saving awareness opportunity for others. The Long Family was honored to assist with the production of this touching informational video,” said Long.

“I always hope my work in the courtroom can bring some peace of mind to the families I represent and help make things safer for everyone,” Gianaris said. “I hope the memory of Lauren and Lacy, through this video, will go on to make a significant impact and save lives.”

Approximately 126 students from 2000 to 2014 have perished from fires that occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing or in off-campus housing within 3 miles of campus, according to the Center for Campus Fire Safety (The Center). Of the 89 fatal fires that occurred during that time, over 85 percent occurred in off-campus housing. The Center is a non-profit, membership based, organization devoted to reducing the loss of life from fire at our nation's campuses. “This tragedy should encourage schools, landlords, parents and students to learn more about fire safety to make educated decisions,” said The Center’s President, Michael J. Swain. “We encourage schools and those managing off-campus student housing to upgrade and maintain their fire protection systems to provide a balanced approach to fire safety.”

Available through Residence Life Cinema, a division of Swank Motion Pictures, this content will join the company’s educational programming library which services over 200 public and private universities throughout the country. In addition, college officials will have the option to require students to watch the video in a commercial-like format before a self-selected movie or TV show episode appears through the university’s closed-circuit streaming service.

“Residence Life Cinema is honored to share Lauren and Lacy’s story across our member network to potentially reach thousands of college students and remind them of the importance of fire safety on and off campus,” stated Residence Life Cinema executive Colin Crane.

Copies of the video will also be available to local high school officials interested in showing the content to seniors as part of their college preparations. Schools and other organizations like fraternities and sororities interested in using the video as part of their programming should contact info@reslife.com to learn more.

[**SIMMONS HANLY CONROY**](#) is one of the nation’s largest mass tort law firms and has recovered more than \$5 billion in verdicts and settlements for plaintiffs. Primary areas of litigation include asbestos and mesothelioma, pharmaceutical, consumer protection, environmental and personal injury. The firm’s attorneys have been appointed

to leadership in numerous national multidistrict litigations, including Vioxx, Yaz and Toyota Unintended Acceleration. The firm also represents small and mid-size corporations, inventors and entrepreneurs in matters involving business litigation. Offices are located in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Alton, Illinois.

[Residence Life Cinema](#) provides campuses nationwide with entertainment, student development content and communication tools through campus channels and streaming technology. Their services act as a recruitment and retention tool as well as, encourage student success by addressing critical issues such as campus safety, binge drinking and sexual assault through various programming materials

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

SEE VIDEO BELOW: