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A decade later, family holds out hope for missing Bogota mom

Sunday, August 22, 2010

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BY RICHARD COWEN

The Record
STAFF WRITER



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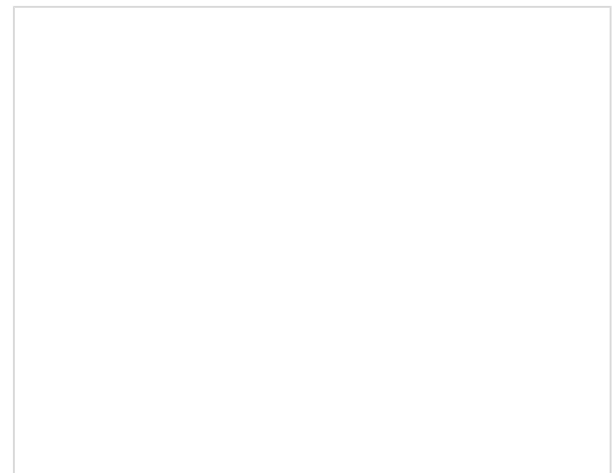
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Nearly 10 years have passed since Patricia Viola vanished from her home on Chestnut Avenue in Bogota. These days, her husband Jim and their children, Christine and Michael do what they can to keep hope from disappearing altogether.



RICHARD COWEN / STAFF

On Saturday, the family got an assist from the Community United Effort Center for Missing Persons, a North Carolina-based non-profit that rolled into Bogota and held a rally on the Violas' front lawn. The group is on a 10-state tour to draw media attention to so-called cold cases of missing persons — and Viola has become this



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Jim Viola reading a tribute to his missing wife, Patricia, during a rally Saturday outside their Bogota home.

Patricia Viola its Honoree of the Year, and the woman's photo is featured prominently on the group's 2010 poster. Although it's an honor the Viola family wishes it could give back, they'll take it for now — because any media attention is always welcome in cases of missing persons.

"Pat's name is in lights on the big banner," her husband, Jim Viola, told the small group that gathered on the lawn. "We're grateful for it, because it's getting harder and harder to draw attention to her case."

Fast facts

* Between 750,000 and 850,000 people are reported missing each year in the United States.

* The Center of Missing Persons website is www.ncmissingpersons.org.

* Anyone who thinks they have seen Patricia Viola, call Bogota Police at 201-487-2400.

year's poster child for the cause.

The CUE Center for Missing Persons has designated

The rally wasn't just about remembrance, it was about prevention. The Bogota Police Department set up a stand to fingerprint children and gave the prints to parents in case they ever needed them. There was also room for parents to affix a locket of their child's hair in case police ever needed a DNA sample.

Patricia Viola was a stay-at-home mom who volunteered at the Bixby School library two blocks away. She was also an epileptic who at the time of her disappearance couldn't drive because she had suffered a recent bout of seizures.

After leaving the library around noon on Feb. 13, 2001, she walked a few blocks home. She picked up a phone message left by her mother, left the house around 1:30 in the afternoon and was never seen again.

The woman left all her belongings in the house — her pocketbook, her medication

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and her cellphone, Viola said. He got home about 4:30 p.m. and thought his wife had gone shopping.

"Since it was the day before Valentine's Day, I figured she just grabbed some money and took the bus and went shopping for a gift at the mall," Viola said. "I really didn't want to believe that something was wrong."

Around 11:30 that night, Viola said, he phoned the Bogota police to report his wife missing. They began a search and in the ensuing days the family hung posters around town. But she was gone without a trace.

Over the years, the Violas have done what they could to keep Patricia Viola's story in the media. They even managed to get her featured on a segment of "America's Most Wanted," but to no avail.

"Somebody had to have seen something that day," said Monica Caison, the director of the Center for Missing Persons. "We never give up hope."

As a symbol of that hope, the rally ended with the release of a bunch of yellow balloons.

"Even though Pat celebrated her 52nd birthday this past Wednesday, we are not ready to extinguish the candles of hope," her husband said.

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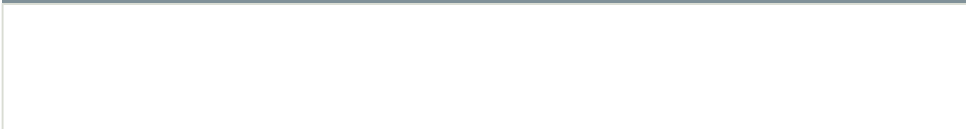
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1. Monday August 23, 2010, 8:16 AM - **PatriciasHusband** says:
Thank you for the coverage on my dear missing wife, Patricia Viola. For more information on Patricia, including Photos, Family and Media Videos, Flyers, Age Progression to Age 50, and more articles, please visit our families web site, <http://www.patriciaviolamissing.homestead.com> Photos of this Saturday's event will be posted on Pat's site within the next day so please check back. We appreciate those who attended and everyone keeping us in their prayers.

2. Sunday August 22, 2010, 7:19 PM - **jazmen** says:
arthuro, you been watching to much tv Most wanted, CSI, LOL
3. Sunday August 22, 2010, 5:41 PM - **Quietstorm** says:
Wow I remember when she first went missing, it hard to believe that 10 years have past. Prayers to the family.
4. Sunday August 22, 2010, 2:18 PM - **EmmKay** says:
<http://patriciaviolamissing.homestead.com/>
5. Sunday August 22, 2010, 1:02 PM - **arthuroarthur** says:
shouldn't the Record have included her photo? Also had a 9 year time lapse photo that shows what she might look like today??
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