

Prayers for Austin and Perry: Two young sons missing at sea



Perry Cohen and Austin Stephanos of Tequesta, Florida have been missing at sea since last Friday afternoon

Life, as we know it, can change in an instant:

Last Friday afternoon, two 14-year old boys from Tequesta, Florida, a small town in Palm Beach County, cruised through the nearby Jupiter Inlet to go fishing, and headed unknowingly into a huge storm. They have not been heard from since.

Austin Stephanos and Perry Cohen have been the focus of the prayers and worries of the entire South Florida community, as well as millions of people throughout the country and the world.

Local news stations first carried the story when a grandmother reported the boys missing late Friday afternoon, having not heard from them for several hours. The strong afternoon thunderstorm was a huge concern. And the news spread quickly as national news and social media updates were posted all weekend about these young boys who are to start high school next month.

The expertise of the Coast Guard:

The United States Coast Guard has been conducting a massive search since the first report that the boys were missing. The entire local community was united in prayer for their quick rescue.

Sadly, it was confirmed on Sunday afternoon that search-and-rescue crews found their 19-foot boat capsized 67 miles east of the Ponce De Leon Inlet near Cape Canaveral. Tragically, the boys were not found with the boat. And the search continues.

As of Monday night, chief of response Captain Mark Fedor reported that extensive searches around-the-clock have covered more than 28,000 square nautical miles, a space larger than the state of West Virginia. (A nautical mile equals 1.151 miles, or 6,076 feet).



A beacon of hope:

The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, completed in 1860,

is the most notable landmark in the small beach town of Jupiter, Florida (established 1925):

Located just 12 miles north of our home on nearby Singer Island, Jupiter was rated the “9th Happiest Seaside Town in America” in 2012 by Coastal Living magazine.

It was in Jupiter that Austin and Perry attended school and where they fished and boated.

Growing up near the water:

Family members have shared that Austin and Perry, best friends since they were little boys, were no strangers to life on the waters. This included many fishing trips on that small, single-engine boat. Young people who grow up in South Florida experience a completely different outdoor culture with many varied activities available on the water. From boating, to fishing, swimming, jet skis, tubing, snorkel and scuba... The opportunities seem endless.

And there is no minimum age requirement for operating a boat in Florida, only the passing of an approved safety course. Hence, many young people are out on the waters without adult supervision. This matter has led to a great deal of debate this week, with discussions on the possibility of implementing age restrictions in boating regulations and proper parenting technique as hot topics for this on-the-water community.

I stated last night in a similar testy discussion on my Facebook page that our individual opinions and parenting philosophies won't bring these boys home. But prayer and rescue teams just might. And I encouraged those involved in the discussion to please pray with us for Austin and Perry's safe return.



The power of prayer and the social media:

Well wishes and tens of thousands of prayers have been posted by persons across the country and around the world on the “Find Austin and Perry” page on Facebook. Many of them also joined together in posting on Instagram and Twitter with the hashtag #MiracleMonday in hopes that the boys would be rescued yesterday.

The parents and families of Austin and Perry are confident that there will indeed be a miracle and their sons brought home. They are offering a \$100,000 reward to anyone who has information leading to the safe return of the boys.



*“And this hope will not lead to disappointment.
For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill
our hearts with his love.”*