

April 2, 2004

704 Mark Drive
Verona, WI 53593

Ms. Nina Link
President
Magazine Publishers of America
810 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10019

Dear Ms. Link:

I am preparing for my meeting with Mr. Michael Pashby of your organization, and I understand that you cannot meet with me. Therefore, I am writing you this letter to say the things that I would have said to you if you had been available.

I began to publicize the problem of the long-time magazine industry practice of using traveling door-to-door sales crews when my daughter, Malinda, was killed in Wisconsin in the well-publicized van crash that killed seven young people in March, 1999. I have spent the last five years researching and organizing news reports and criminal histories of sales crew operators, and placing that information on my website at www.travelingsalescrews.info. But I decided to ask to meet with you when I realized that the families of victims of this industry can only do so much. The publishers, themselves, who produce and control the sale of its products, have the ultimate responsibility to see that their magazines are sold in a lawful manner only.

It is time for the MPA to take an active position in attacking the problem of the criminal abuse of young people who travel in crews, and of customers in their homes.

I cannot be more serious when I tell you that the magazine industry, and you in particular as the President of the MPA, have looked the other way for many years, avoiding dealing with the problem of abusive, thieving, homicidal magazine sales crews.

As the trade group for American magazines, the MPA must be on its' feet, pointing the way for publishers to rid itself of the ugly moral and legal stain that has saturated the industry.

Just as the MPA has taken on the issue of fraudulent practices in telemarketing and sweepstakes, dealing with it openly on its' website and in its' conventions, the MPA must openly deal with the issue of magazine sales crews. Put this issue up on your website and invite assistance from victims and the general public. Begin an official investigation in partnership with the FTC.

Without delay, advise publishers of the legal path to take in canceling contracts with door-to-door sales operations. Change the MPA Guidelines to reflect the results of the investigation.

Advise members on tightening the process of subscription acceptance: water-tight identification of subscription sources; a “cease and desist” letter for multiple-function clearinghouses who continue to send in subscriptions without such identification; and a better contract example for publishers that specifically forbids sales crew subscriptions.

Begin filing lawsuits, MPA and large publisher members together, against large clearinghouses that do not comply.

I will stay in touch with Mr. Pashby, whom I assume handles the issue of door-to-door sales crews, to see what actions the MPA is taking.

It is a shame that you could not meet with me personally, for I believe that action on the part of the MPA needs to come from the convictions of its’ President as well as its’ other officers.

Phil Ellenbecker
Dedicated Memorial Parents’ Group
www.travelingsalescrews.info