

We moved as a family of three down from Wisconsin summer of June '22 for healing not expecting any drama especially from the coaching staff. We experienced the traumatizing loss of my husband/Dad within a year of moving.

Naomi was at a state cross country meet in Wisconsin and had just finished her meet as I got the phone call from a sheriff that her dad had committed suicide.

She is dealing with flashbacks and her running this past year here at Arnold High school with XC is a great accomplishment.

She was always encouraged by the previous coaching staff, fellow athletes. She thrived being with the team. Naomi is more of a sprinter and a basketball player than a long distance runner, but enjoys the camaraderie and conditioning offered by XC.

Regina called in the summer to ask why Naomi wasn't attending the (optional) summer practices. Naomi had attended two optional summer practices.

I told Regina she wasn't as motivated and grieving the loss of her dad. She was adjusting to the heat, as we had just spent three weeks in Wisconsin in the early summer. Additionally she had started a job at Captain Anderson which required her time. And lastly, her friend Maddie, had not been at the optional practices, as she was practicing with Coach Tom. Regina mentioned to me that Maddie not being coached in the summer by the Merritt's was not good for the team.

Fish camp day, August 8, 2023 when Naomi returned home and Maddie came over later, Maddie brought up a situation that occurred at practice that traumatized Naomi. Then the girls went on to tell me that Frank Merritt called her out during the group meeting. He said she was out of shape and slow. He directly addressed her and said for the whole team to look at her, that she would not make the team time because she was out of shape in his opinion. Naomi felt humiliated and shamed standing in that circle. Naomi was very affected and upset, but begged me not to say anything to the coaches because she was scared that they would retaliate against her.

August 10th Thursday evening

Naomi was having issues with her hip and back, which locked up (now resolved via chiropractic aid). I messaged Regina re: Naomi is not to run, but can she be shown other exercises that might help her work through the hip/back issue. At this point, the Merritts had seen her run no more than 3 times this season. Naomi was at practice despite her injury on Friday August 11th.

Friday August 11 in the late morning, I received a call from the Merritts to discuss their concern for Naomi's health. They wanted her to avoid injury by taking a break from XC so she can play basketball. I told them how much the team has meant to Naomi in her journey of healing from recent traumas. Merritts said Maddie was injured and might very well be out for the rest of the season, if not a good part of it. I believe they said this as additional persuasion for her to quit the team. They said Naomi was in worse shape than she was last year. They told me although of course it's our decision to make, they think it's in Naomi's best interest to leave the cross country team. I felt pressured by the medical advice Frank was influencing me and therefore I agreed to listen to their advice because Regina offered to talk with Naomi and I.

When I told Naomi about the call, she broke down in tears because she did not want to leave the team. When we called Regina, Her first question was "what are your thoughts on cross country?" Naomi responded by telling her that she was not a big fan of it but she loved being part of the team. She was not very engaged, responding with "Yes ma'am", "No ma'am",

submitting and numb from being upset. Regina said “you don’t have to feel bad about it, we’re going to refund your mom her \$250”. Naomi never had a chance to speak up and say she wanted to remain on the team during that phone call but was forced to quit.

That Friday Naomi went with the Nichols to a lake house for the weekend. After her return I found out there were several other families in similar situations.

August 17th Naomi and I had a meeting with Mr Green and Mr Smith about what was taking place on the XC Team and how it affected my daughter. Naomi also shared with them how she was made to feel. In that meeting Mr Green stated that Naomi was allowed to come back on the team anytime. He made that decision himself during the meeting without coach approval. Before I left that meeting I made it clear that I don't trust Frank after what he did to Naomi and don't want him near her. Mr Green then asked us at that time to meet with him and the Merritt's which Naomi and I agreed to.

On August 21 I received a text which was sent to both Naomi and Coach Green as well from Regina saying Naomi was welcome to come back but gave a time limit of 8pm to respond. Text is attached.

On August 24th I went to school and took Jordan Nichols for support into the meeting. The coaches all tried to intimidate me by having a group of people including all the volunteer coaches present that are parents of other athletes. There was Coach Green, Regina, Frank, Julio and Stacey Flores all present in the meeting room. I had been told this meeting was with the Merritts and Coach Green only so I asked for the extra people to leave. Instead they wanted my support person Jordan Nichols to leave but I had already arranged permission to have him there by Mr. Smith. This upset them all but they finally left when Coach Green asked them to.

As soon as the meeting began, Regina started talking about how much they love Naomi and of course Naomi could stay on the team. I let her finish talking, but saw no point in the meeting after that. So I told Frank to stay away from my daughter and told him “may God have mercy on you”. And I walked out. There was no bizarre behavior except Regina got loud and jumped up saying I could not leave, which was witnessed by Jordan Nichols.

Later that evening I received a horrible harassing and insensitive email from Regina. I’m shocked by the behavior of a bay district school employee that is supposed to look after our children. Also besides being a horrific letter, the accusations in it were inaccurate. Email is attached.

The email response I received from Steve Moss clearly states that Regina wants no contact with me or my daughter and also none between us and her sons. He states that Naomi will not be on the Track team. Naomi being a student with great standing with all teachers and coaches has every right as a student of Arnold to be on the Track team so does this mean since Regina does not want contact with her that she will not be the Track Coach? Or is he saying Naomi will not be allowed on the Track team which is clear discrimination?

Naomi has been so traumatized by all of this that now she is even scared to walk into the gym hall in the morning. She is afraid to see or be confronted by them or have any interactions with them. She used to leave her basketball bag which she needs for her 7th period class in her gym locker, but due to fear of running into the Merritts she now carries two heavy backpacks with her all day instead. Naomi is still traumatized and grieving the loss of her dad and with this added

stress her academics are being affected. Even her math teacher has noticed it and spoken to me.

I have printed communications for you to see. After reading it, if you have any questions you are welcome to contact me or any parties mentioned.

I appreciate your time.

10:52

LTE

10:51

LTE



3 People >



3 People >



Mon, Aug 21 at 12:44 PM

Regina Merritt

Good afternoon. Irina, Naomi, I am including Coach Rick Green on this text. I just wanted to clear up some obvious confusion. There are people sending out misinformation. We have loved our relationship with you guys since we met you for the first time in the AHS parking lot last summer. Naomi, you are welcome to run cross country this fall. You are in good standing with this team and can join us tomorrow morning for

tomorrow morning for practice if you want to run. You told me that you did not enjoy the longer distances in cross country as much as track which led to my phone call to you guys. If you have changed your mind and you would like to run cross country come on back! I have to make my roster and accommodations so please let me know your answer by 8:00 this evening. I can add you back to the roster, no problem. Thank you, Regina Merritt

RM

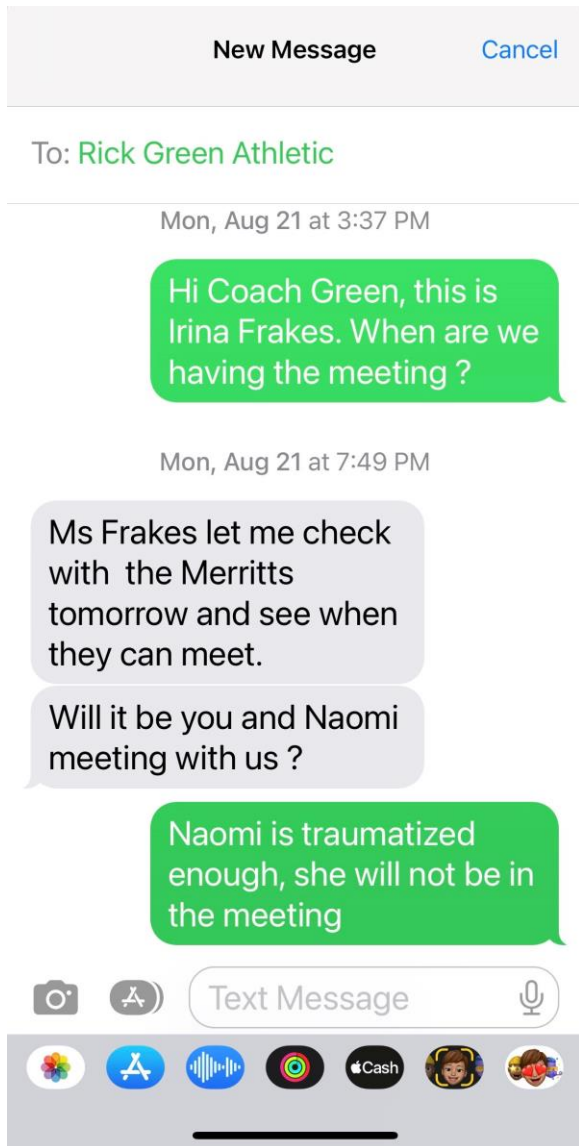


Text Message

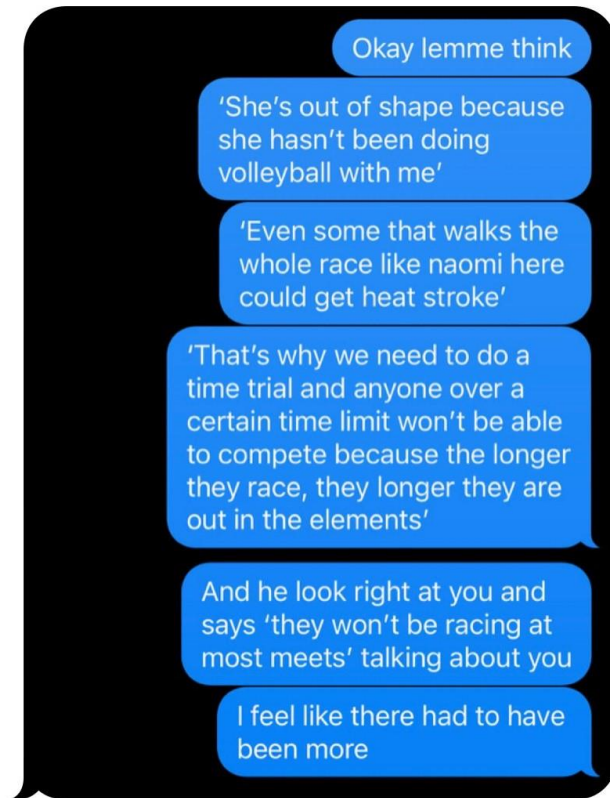


Text Message





Screenshot from text conversation with Madelynn Nichols



Mon, Aug 21 at 10:10 PM



Fish day cross country morning practice and what was heard by kids from Mr Frank Merritt

Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>

Fri, Sep 1, 2023 at 9:08 AM

To: Lauren Nichols <jlnchl31@gmail.com>

Hey Naomi your mom asked me to write what I remembered from that day so here it is.

On 8/8/23 around 0630-0640am we were all standing in a circle listening to Mr. Frank Merritt discuss plans for the meets. He approached the topic of race times and began to talk about how this year he will not let some runners compete in the meet if he does not feel they will have a good enough time. He said he can walk a 12 minute mile so we all better be under 36 minutes. He said there will be time trials before the race to determine who will not be running that weekend. He then looked over to Naomi Frakes who was standing directly next to me and said to everyone look at Naomi she's slow and definitely in worse shape than last season, people like her will be the ones to not make the time cut.

Statement from Zayna September



Fwd: Boundaries

Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
To: Lauren Nichols <jlnchl31@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 24, 2023 at 8:36 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Regina Merritt <pro_pt@yahoo.com>
Date: August 24, 2023 at 8:04:27 PM CDT
To: ifrakes11@gmail.com
Cc: Ricci Green <greenrj@bay.k12.fl.us>, franklin merritt <vitalitydoc@yahoo.com>
Subject: Boundaries

Irina,

After witnessing your bizarre behavior today, preceded by your other bizarre behavior patterns over the past year, we will not communicate with you or Naomi in the future and likewise ask that you and Naomi not communicate with us, especially our sons, Samuel and Levi.

Over the past year we have incorporated the two of you into our community, welcomed you, been an encouragement to you both. This summer we even secured a job for Naomi after you asked if we had any ideas of where she could work and she didn't show up to talk to the manager. You have even engaged my husband in a very long and dark phone conversation regarding allegations of your deceased husband's mental and physical abuse of you and Naomi which made him very uncomfortable as he, your deceased husband, has no way to defend himself or his name against these allegations. That is just not how we act in our home and it was very disturbing to Frank. Another time you made Frank very uncomfortable was at a track meet this past spring when you say to him, in front of Coach Tom's wife mind you, "I am so excited you (referring to Frank) will be taking over after Tom leaves. Tom runs these kids too much and injures them." Frank tries to cover for you and mentions that being a coach is a thankless job and Tom has done a good job establishing the program. But, the damage was done as Tom's wife replied to your comment that she was ready for Tom to be finished. Stacy Flores witnessed this as she was working the concession stand with y'all.

And after today, I think you just hate men....the allegations against your deceased husband, the badgering of Tom, and today, an attack on my husband. Our boys even mentioned you glared at them on your way through the parking lot. I am seeing a trend that you hate men. Sorry I will not give you a chance to spread your poison to our boys who are wonderful Christian, young men, like their father.

By the way, I am not writing this as a coach, as your daughter is not on the cross country team. This is just from a woman who loves her husband and 2 sons to a woman that is very bitter toward men.

I will pray for y'all, but from afar,

Regina Merritt

P. S. I only cc Rick Green as he was present for your outburst and he is a witness to it.



Fwd: Boundaries

1 message

Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
To: Lauren Nichols <jlnchl31@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 28, 2023 at 11:04 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Joseph Smith <smithjb@bay.k12.fl.us>
Date: August 28, 2023 at 9:25:48 AM CDT
To: Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
Cc: buchahd@bay.k12.fl.us
Subject: Re: Boundaries

Ms. Frakes,

I left a voicemail message on your cell phone as I was attempting to follow up regarding this email.

I want to assure you that after speaking with the coaches, in addition to discussing this matter with Ms. Buchanan (I am following up on her behalf too), there is no threat toward you, your daughter or your family. Coach Merritt's intentions, and that of Dr. Merritt, are to honor your request for their to no longer be contact between them and Naomi.

I apologize for any uncomfortableness or concern you experienced as a result of this incident.

Go Marlins!

Britt Smith

Principal

J. R. Arnold High School

Home of the Marlins

550 N. Alf Coleman Road

Panama City Beach, Florida 32407

email: smithjb@bay.k12.fl.us

School Telephone: 850.767.3700

Cell Telephone: 407.267.8723



Britt Smith
Principal
J.R. Arnold High School, Bay District Schools

[Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [Facebook](#)

@ArnoldMarlins @ArnoldMarlinsPrincipal Arnold High School

Arnold High School



On Fri, Aug 25, 2023 at 11:58 AM Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com> wrote:

Mr Smith and Mrs Buchanan,

Last night, I received a disturbing email that I consider threatening in nature.

Sincerely

Irina Frakes

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Regina Merritt <pro_pt@yahoo.com>

Date: August 24, 2023 at 8:04:27 PM CDT

To: ifrakes11@gmail.com

Cc: Ricci Green <greenrj@bay.k12.fl.us>, franklin merritt <vitalitydoc@yahoo.com>

Subject: Boundaries

Irina,

After witnessing your bizarre behavior today, preceded by your other bizarre behavior patterns over the past year, we will not communicate with you or Naomi in the future and likewise ask that you and Naomi not communicate with us, especially our sons, Samuel and Levi.

Over the past year we have incorporated the two of you into our community, welcomed you, been an encouragement to you both. This summer we even secured a job for Naomi after you asked if we had any ideas of where she could work and she didn't show up to talk to the manager. You have even engaged my husband in a very long and dark phone conversation regarding allegations of your deceased husband's mental and physical abuse of you and Naomi which made him very uncomfortable as he, your deceased husband, has no way to defend himself or his name against these allegations. That is just not how we act in our home and it was very disturbing to Frank. Another time you made Frank very uncomfortable was at a track meet this past spring when you say to him, in front of Coach Tom's wife mind you, "I am so excited you (referring to Frank) will be taking over after Tom leaves. Tom runs these kids too much and injures them." Frank tries to cover for you and mentions that being a coach is a thankless job and Tom has done a good job establishing the program. But, the damage was done as Tom's wife replied to your comment that she was ready for Tom to be finished. Stacy Flores witnessed this as she was working the concession stand with y'all.

And after today, I think you just hate men....the allegations against your deceased husband, the badgering of Tom, and today, an attack on my husband. Our boys even mentioned you glared at them on your way through the parking lot. I am seeing a trend that you hate men. Sorry I will not give you a chance to spread your poison to our boys who are wonderful Christian, young men, like their father.

By the way, I am not writing this as a coach, as your daughter is not on the cross country team. This is just from a woman who loves her husband and 2 sons to a woman that is very bitter toward men.

I will pray for y'all, but from afar,

Regina Merritt

P. S. I only cc Rick Green as he was present for your outburst and he is a witness to it.

The information contained in this message may be privileged and confidential and protected from disclosure. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or an employee or agent responsible for delivering this message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by replying to the message and deleting it from your computer. Under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public-records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or in writing.



Fwd: Boundaries

Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
To: Lauren Nichols <jlunch31@gmail.com>

Fri, Sep 1, 2023 at 8:58 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
Date: August 30, 2023 at 8:33:54 AM CDT
To: Lauren Nichols <jlunch31@gmail.com>
Subject: Fwd: Boundaries

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Steven Moss <mossst@bay.k12.fl.us>
Date: August 30, 2023 at 8:02:27 AM CDT
To: Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
Cc: Mark McQueen <mcquemt@bay.k12.fl.us>, Joshua Laatsch <laatsj@bay.k12.fl.us>
Subject: Re: Boundaries

Hello Irina,

Thanks for reaching out to me. I have read Mrs. Merritt's email several times and I am failing to see the threatening nature of the email. I mean she has made it very clear that she does not want her two boys associating with Naomi or yourself. That being said, I didn't read anywhere where she is planning to retaliate against you or Naomi if her request is not followed. She doesn't mention any physical harm or law enforcement involvement or anything that I would classify as threatening in nature. If indeed Naomi is no longer on the track team, as the email states, then in theory it should be relatively easy for there to not be any additional contact in the future between you and Mrs. Merritt and between her two boys...or at least I would hope.

Have a great rest of the week,
Steve

On Sun, Aug 27, 2023 at 9:46 PM Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Irina <ifrakes11@gmail.com>
Date: August 27, 2023 at 9:38:38 PM CDT
To: mossst@bay.k12.fl.us, mcquemt@bay.k12.fl.us, laatsj@bay.k12.fl.us
Subject: Fwd: Boundaries

Mr. McQueen, Mr. Moss,
Mr. Laatsch,

Thursday night , I received a disturbing email that I consider threatening in nature.
Sincerely
Irina Frakes

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Regina Merritt <pro_pt@yahoo.com>
Date: August 24, 2023 at 8:04:27 PM CDT
To: ifrakes11@gmail.com
Cc: Ricci Green <greenrj@bay.k12.fl.us>, franklin merritt
<vitalitydoc@yahoo.com>
Subject: Boundaries

Irina,

After witnessing your bizarre behavior today, preceded by your other bizarre behavior patterns over the past year, we will not communicate with you or Naomi in the future and likewise ask that you and Naomi not communicate with us, especially our sons, Samuel and Levi.

Over the past year we have incorporated the two of you into our community, welcomed you, been an encouragement to you both. This summer we even secured a job for Naomi after you asked if we had any ideas of where she could work and she didn't show up to talk to the manager. You have even engaged my husband in a very long and dark phone conversation regarding allegations of your deceased husband's mental and physical abuse of you and Naomi which made him very uncomfortable as he, your deceased husband, has no way to defend himself or his name against these allegations. That is just not how we act in our home and it was very disturbing to Frank. Another time you made Frank very uncomfortable was at a track meet this past spring when you say to him, in front of Coach Tom's wife mind you, "I am so excited you (referring to Frank) will be taking over after Tom leaves. Tom runs these kids too much and injures them." Frank tries to cover for you and mentions that being a coach is a thankless job and Tom has done a good job establishing the program. But, the damage was done as Tom's wife replied to your comment that she was ready for Tom to be finished. Stacy Flores witnessed this as she was working the concession stand with y'all.

And after today, I think you just hate men....the allegations against your deceased husband, the badgering of Tom, and today, an attack on my husband. Our boys even mentioned you glared at them on your way through the parking lot. I am seeing a trend that you hate men. Sorry I will not give you a chance to spread your poison to our boys who are wonderful Christian, young men, like their father.

By the way, I am not writing this as a coach, as your daughter is not on the cross country team. This is just from a woman who loves her husband and 2 sons to a woman that is very bitter toward men.

I will pray for y'all, but from afar,

Regina Merritt

P. S. I only cc Rick Green as he was present for your outburst and he is a witness to it.

--

Steve Moss
School Board Chairman
Bay County School Board
(850) 866-9020 (cell)
(850) 767-4222 (office)

"Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource."

President John F. Kennedy, 1962

The information contained in this message may be privileged and confidential and protected from disclosure. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or an employee or agent responsible for delivering this message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by replying to the message and deleting it from your computer. Under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public-records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or in writing.