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# **The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?**

**2006 Food Safety Education Conference  
September 29, 2006**

**Barbara Kowalcyk, M.A.**

**President, Safe Tables Our Priority**



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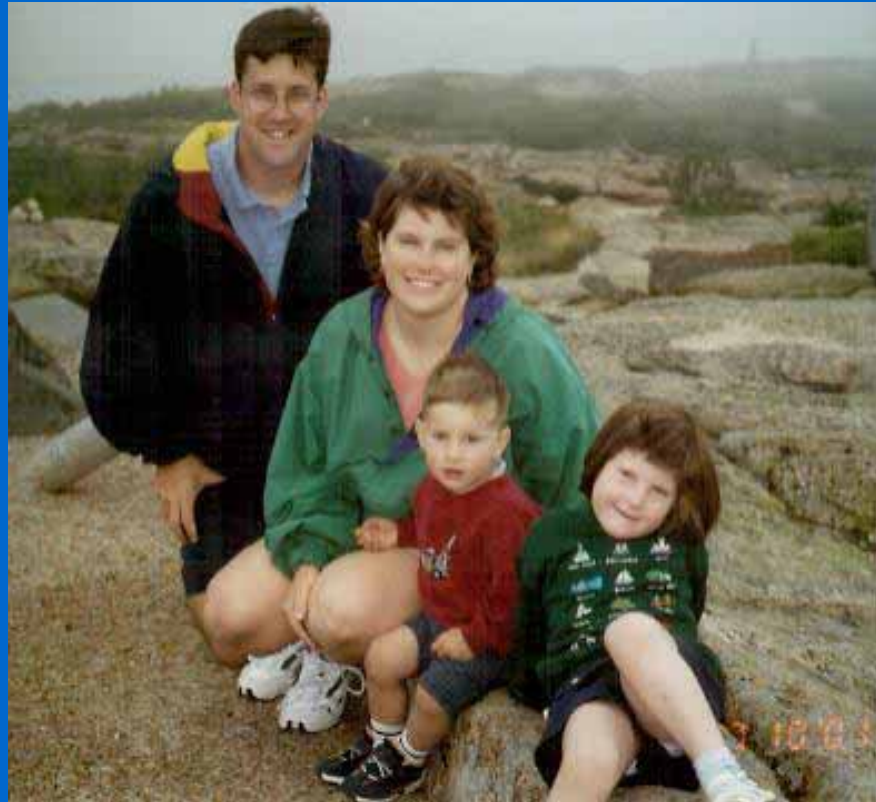
## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?

“Who’s on First?”

The Ambiguity of Who is Responsible

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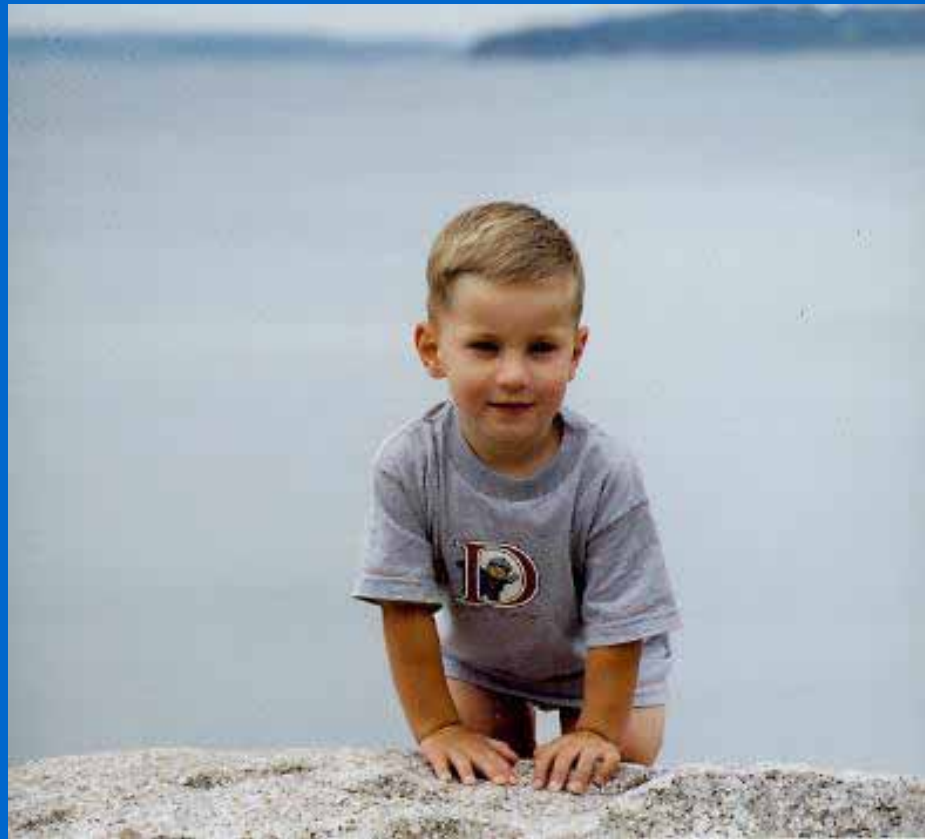
## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?



Barb, Mike, Megan & Kevin Kowalcyk  
July 2001, Acadia National Park, Maine

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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?



Kevin Michael Kowalcyk, age 2 1/2  
12/10/98 - 8/11/01

## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?

### Are Safe Food Handling Practices Enough?

- Ongoing, national *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak
- “Evaluation of Consumer-Style Cooking Methods for Reduction of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 in Ground Beef”
  - Rhee et al. *Journal of Food Protection*. June 2003
  - Cooked inoculated hamburger patties in one of 3 ways
  - Achieved three temperature readings of 160 degrees
  - 22% still tested positive for one popular cooking method



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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?

According to the CDC, it is estimated that

**76 million** Americans are sickened,

**325,000** Americans are hospitalized

and

**5,000** Americans die

each year from food-borne illnesses.

## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?

Foodborne illnesses account for about 1 of every 100 hospitalizations and 1 of every 500 deaths<sup>1</sup>.

*Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157:H7, *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Toxoplasma gondii* cause an estimated \$6.9 billion in medical costs, lost productivity and premature deaths<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Buzby, Frenzen, and Rasco. Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, USDA. Agricultural Economic Report No. 799: *Product Liability and Microbial Foodborne Illness*.

<sup>2</sup> Buzby. Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, USDA. *Children and Microbial Foodborne Illness*. Food Review, Vol 24, Issue 2.





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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?



Aimee Ermel, before she  
was stricken with  
*E. coli* O157:H7 and HUS.

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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?



Aimee Ermel, age 2, hospitalized with *E. coli* O157:H7

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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?



Although Aimee survived, she was deathly ill, as most HUS kids are.

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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?



Kevin Michael Kowalcyk, age 2 1/2  
12/10/98 - 8/11/01

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## **The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?**

**Accountability**

**Fosters**

**Responsibility**

# The Faces of Foodborne Illness



Lauren Rudolph  
Died, Age 6  
*E. coli* O157:H7



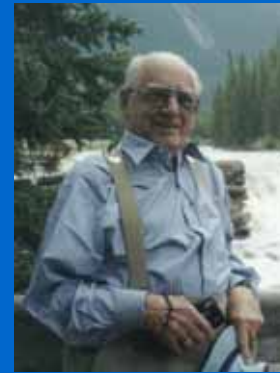
Alex Donley  
Died, Age 6  
*E. coli* O157:H7



Brianne Kriefall  
Died, Age 3  
*E. coli* O157:H7



Kevin Kowalczyk  
Died, Age 2  
*E. coli* O157:H7



Henry Knam  
Died  
Salmonellosis



Brooke Fisher  
Died, Age 2  
*E. coli* O157:H7



Pam & Louise Berger  
*Listeria* Victim



Julia Capriotti  
*Listeria* Victim



Elizabeth Tikitri & Jordan Keane  
*E. coli* O157:H7 Victims



Chance Moore  
*E. coli* O157:H7 Victim



Chance Moore  
*E. coli* O157:H7 Victim

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## The Liability of Foodborne Illness: Who is Responsible?

For more information, please contact

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