

He Fights to Protect Babies from Abuse

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Darryl Gibbs, 43

Yonkers, N.Y.

TRAGEDY: In 2000 Gibbs' 8-month-old daughter Cynthia died after a licensed child-care provider shook her so hard it caused massive brain damage. (The woman is serving up to 15 years for manslaughter.) Gibbs, divorced with two other daughters, "wanted to die."

MISSION: Instead, the retired corrections officer pulled himself together, did some research and learned that shaken baby syndrome harms some 1,400 children a year—about 65 percent survive with severe disabilities. In those cases "it's tough for prosecutors to get a conviction because they have to prove intent," he says.

REAL CHANGE: Gibbs turned crusader, working the phones and gathering 10,000 signatures. The result: Cynthia's Law makes it a felony in New York State to cause injury—regardless of intent—by

"shaking, slamming or throwing" a child under 5. The penalty is up to seven years in prison. A victim's advocate with the Westchester County D.A.'s office, Gibbs is pushing for federal legislation and counseling parents. "His strength is heartening," says Patrick Donohue, 37, whose daughter suffered brain damage after being shaken by a nanny. "The world would be much better if there were a lot more Darryl Gibbises. In fact, it would be better if there were one more Darryl Gibbs."

By Nicole Weisensee Egan

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"The work that I do will never, ever replace Cynthia," says Gibbs. "It's my responsibility to make sure she didn't die in vain."