

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Letter: Ginger Katz

Drugs don't discriminate

Monday, December 6, 2010

I understand there have been several drug-related deaths in your community. I know too well the pain of this loss. On Sept. 10, 1996, I lost my 20-year-old son, Ian, to a drug overdose just before he was going into a rehabilitation program the next day. Ian had used tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs in high school.

Once, he was picked up by an officer at Cranbury Park in Norwalk, Conn. He was scolded and told to go home. The officer said, "If I ever find you in this town again with any drugs, I will arrest you; now go home." I insisted that Ian go into counseling right then.

I had such high hopes for Ian; I thought we had caught a possible addiction early. I thought it all went away, until I received the phone call from his biological dad stating he was snorting heroin in college. My breath was taken away. My life changed. My friends knew there was something different about me.

At first, I was ashamed of his problem. I didn't want to tell anyone when he came home from college. He was going to a day-treatment program, and we thought his problem was being fixed. He didn't want me to tell his friends who did not know. The ugly truth is, the problem wasn't fixed. I found him in the morning just before I was going to meet my friend at 6 a.m. for our morning run.

Ian died in his sleep. Neighbors said my cries for help to 911 that morning were heard two blocks away.

Addiction doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter who you are, what race you are, how financially sound you are, if you're homeless or if you have a family that loves you dearly. It can happen to anyone. Drug addiction not only destroys the person who is using, it also destroys the family.

Addiction robs you of your money, it robs you of your spirit, and finally, when you have nothing else left to give ... it robs you of your soul. My son Ian was a good, kind person who suffered from a terrible disease, and we miss him every day of our lives.

My husband and I founded the Courage to Speak Foundation in 1996 after Ian died. My community as well as others wanted us to speak out. Even if you think your child will never do drugs, you must find out what they will be exposed to.

I will be presenting the Courage to Speak presentation at Martinsville High School's auditorium tonight, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m. All children, parents, grandparents, community leaders, law enforcement, school administrators, teachers and other concerned citizens are invited to attend the presentation.

The program will be sponsored by HEY, CHILL, Project Success, Drug Task Force, SPCA, PAA, and VA ABC. For more information, call Katie Connelly at 340-9186, or e-mail kconnelly@piedmontcsb.org. Visit www.couragetospeak.org.