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Woman who lost son to drugs has 'courage to speak' about addiction to local audience Oct. 26

By: Jason Vallee , Special to Imprint Newspapers

Whether its on inner city streets or the backyards of a wealthy neighborhood, illegal drugs pose an imminent threat to adolescents and young adults. Learning how to fight back against drug abuse can mean a world of difference for parents and their families.

On Oct. 26, area residents will have a unique opportunity to hear the effect drugs can have on even the closest of families during "Courage to Speak," a Youth-Adult Council program featuring nationally-renowned anti-drug speaker Ginger Katz. The program will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Council Chambers at Newington Town Hall.

"Addiction does not discriminate," Katz said in a letter to the editor. "It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what race you are, how financially sound you are, if you are homeless or if you have a family who loves you dearly. It can happen to anyone." Katz lost her son, Ian, on Sept. 10, 1996 after he overdosed on drugs just one day before entering a voluntary rehabilitation program. As a popular kid and better-than-average student, Ian Katz was not seen as the typical abuser, but he became a target anyway. Confronted with the devastating loss, Katz decided she would take action to help prevent other families from suffering through the same traumatic experiences that her family had been exposed to. Just a few months after her son's death, she formed The Courage To Speak Inc., a drug prevention program that has since made more than 800 presentations at schools and other public forums.

"Ginger puts on a powerful presentation and it's important for parents to be exposed to what can happen," said Ken Freidenberg, director of the Human Services Department. "Newington is not immune to the threat of drugs, whether it be with youth or adults." The program will not only give parents a chance to hear about Katz's experiences, but to use her knowledge to help learn how the skills for primary prevention, early identification and intervention of use.

Freidenberg encourages parents of all children, whether in pre-school or college graduates, to attend the event because of the different ways in which drug abuse can affect not only a family, but the en-tire community.

"It's important that the community support a program like this and helps support the prevention effort," Freidenberg said.

The program is open to anyone from the public and parents are encouraged to attend and take an active role in the conversations.

Free babysitting will also be available for younger children that evening. Contact the Human Services Department at (860) 665-8590 for information.

