

Katz aims to educate parents about drugs

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MILFORD – When Ginger Katz lost her 20-year-old son Ian to a heroin overdose in 1996, she made it her mission to spare other families such heartache.

“The number one key to preventing substance abuse is for parents to talk to their children about the dangers of drugs,” said Katz. “But only one in three parents do this,” she said. “Parents have a lot of power and they need to use it.”

Katz established the Courage to Speak Foundation, Inc., to foster open communication about the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse and she developed the Courageous Parenting 101 program to give parents the tools to keep their children safe.

The United Way of Milford and the Milford Prevention Council will sponsor a presentation by Katz this evening, March 4 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of Milford Hospital, 300 Seaside Ave.

“I plan to share Ian’s story in my presentation, the journey through his school years and the decisions he made that affected and changed his life and the lives of his family and friends,” said Katz, who has been speaking nationally about Ian for 13 years.

She will also discuss signs that indicate drug and alcohol abuse, prevention, the code of silence and its dangers, addiction and its impact on families, what to do if your child is using or experimenting with drugs or alcohol, and how to recognize risky behaviors and relationships.

“Ginger Katz’s talk is the kickoff to the five-week Courageous Parenting 101 class, which will begin the following week,” said Pamela Staneski of the United Way, adding that the talk is free and open to the public. “The course is also free, but registration is required,” she said.

The class is scheduled Mondays, March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. in two locations. Parents may sign up for the sessions at Bridges, 949 Bridgeport Ave., or at East Shore Middle School, 240 Chapel St.

Trained facilitators will help parents to understand what their children are facing and talk about what they can do to protect them. Facilitators include: Wendy Gibbons-Shepro, Dawn Roy and Stacy Bufalini, all from Bridges, and Marcia Winter, a parent volunteer.

Katz will continue to encourage people to have the courage to speak out about addiction. “After Ian died, his friends came to my house in pain, with secrets, talking about what had been going on. They hadn’t confided in their parents or other adults. It was a code of silence and silence kills when kids don’t ask for help,” she said. “If we don’t talk about these things, we won’t find solutions and if there aren’t solutions, the addiction will continue,” she said.

To register, email milfordpreventioncouncil@gmail.com or call the United Way at 203-874-6791. For information about Katz’s foundation, visit www.couragetospeak.org.