



Courage to Speak Awarded \$500,000

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NORWALK

Hour Staff Reports

A local organization dedicated to educating youths and parents about the dangers of drugs received a half-million dollar grant Friday.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention awarded the grant to the Courage to Speak Foundation so that the Norwalk-based nonprofit could further expand its educational programs, according to a news release.

Ginger Katz, a Norwalk native, founded the Courage to Speak Foundation in 1996 after her son Ian Eaccarino died of a drug overdose. He was 20 years old.

Through the foundation, Katz brings her anti-drug message to schools and communities throughout the nation. Katz has given nearly 1,000 presentations to young people around the country to empower open communication about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

The Courage to Speak Drug Prevention Curriculum has been adopted by the Norwalk Public Schools, including West Rocks Middle School, which hosted the organization's Family Night Dinner in March.

"With the number of teens using drugs on the rise, it becomes all the more important to get the message out, and I think Family Night does that in a powerful way," Katz said at the time.

The Norwalk Police Department has also partnered with Courage to Speak this year in "Operation Medicine Drop" to collect prescription medication at the event and dispose of the drugs in a safe manner. The grant will allow Katz to bring her educational program to more communities in the United States and it will provide funds needed to expand the Courage To Speak staff, according to the news release. The foundation also recently received a \$10,500 grant from the Stamford-based First County Bank Association.