

Milford group to focus on substance abuse

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By Chris Rhatigan, Register Correspondent

MILFORD — A new group of city leaders, businesspeople, parents and faith-based representatives will seek to combat substance abuse problems.

Milford grant coordinator Marcia Winter said the Milford Prevention Council will meet about five times a year along with having several special events and will focus on substance abuse problems of the city's youths.

"We are trying to get all of these people in the community involved," she said.

The council will sponsor a talk by Ginger Katz at 7 tonight at Milford Hospital on Seaside Avenue. Katz is the founder of the Courage to Speak Foundation, a teen drug prevention program. Katz's college-age son died of a drug overdose.

The event is free.

The council will include Mayor James L. Richetelli Jr., Police Chief Keith Mello, Fire Chief Louis LaVecchia, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Michael Cummings, Superintendent of Schools Harvey B. Polansky and Health Director Dr. A. Dennis McBride.

The group will provide education, training, alternative youth activities, support for treatment and recovery services, and raise awareness.

"We are doing our darnedest to be the best community we can be by taking this proactive approach," Winter said.

Winter emphasized that the formation of the council doesn't mean Milford has a substance abuse epidemic. She said the problems in the city are similar to those in other communities.

However, she said there isn't much data regarding the city's substance abuse problems. A recent school survey should shine more light on the subject. The survey will be completed annually.

Winter said she will be looking to land grants that the council can use to help combat substance abuse issues.

Richetelli said that to secure grant funds, more data will be essential.

"We found very quickly that to be eligible for any kinds of grants, you need to have benchmark data," he said.

Richetelli said he thinks the council will be "vitally important" to battling substance abuse.

"I think there needs to be one central group that coordinates this effort," he said. "We value our youth. We value our families, and this is part of ... a realization of the values in our community."

Winter said the council will sponsor a free, five-week course on "Courageous Parenting." Also, Bob Anastas, founder of Students Against Drunk Driving, will speak at 7 p.m. Oct. 19 in City Hall. For more information, contact milfordpreventioncouncil@gmail.com and visit www.couragetospeak.org

see link

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Reader Comments

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Ginger Katz wrote on Sep 23, 2009 9:46 AM:

" **"DRUGS DON'T DISCRIMINATE"**
by Ginger Katz

On September 10, 1996, I lost my 20-year-old son, Ian James to a drug overdose just before he was going into a rehabilitation program the next day. Ian had used tobacco, marijuana and alcohol in high school. At one point he was picked up by an officer at Cranbury Park in Norwalk, CT. 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 at that point. I had such high hopes for Ian; I thought we had caught a potential 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 about his problem 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 in Norwalk 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 six am for our morning run. Ian died in his sleep. Neighbors told me my cries for help to 911 that morning were heard two blocks away.

Addiction does not discriminate. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what race you are, how financially sound you are, if your homeless or if you have a family who 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 everyday of our lives.

I founded the Courage to Speak Foundation a non-profit 501-c3 organization in 1996 the following months after Ian died. My community as well as others wanted me to speak out. The organization was formed to help reduce the drug use among young people and to encourage parents to learn everything our children will be exposed to. Even if you think your child will never do drugs you

must find out what they will be exposed to. My husband and I have given over 1000 presentations nationally, sharing our message with students in elementary, middle and high schools, colleges and parents as well as other forums to prevent this tragedy from happening to another family.

The Courage to Speak Foundation developed a new program for parents called Courage to Speak – Courageous Parenting 101. The program is a free five-session (once a week) substance abuse education and prevention course for parents wishing to arm themselves with the knowledge of how to keep their children safe and you can sign up for the course at the presentation or call 203-874-7691.

I will be presenting the Courage to Speak presentation at the Milford Hospital at 7 pm on September 23rd. All children (ages 10 and up), parents, grandparents, community leaders, law enforcement, school administrators, teachers and any other concerned citizens are invited to attend the presentation. The program is sponsored by the Milford Prevention Council and the United Way of Milford. email milfordpreventioncouncil@gmail.com and visit www.couragetospeak.org