

CeCe

It's such a sad situation to watch your child begin to go downhill like this.

Ryan was a normal young man, a normal child.

He was like the kid next door.

Did the same things that every other child does.

He played in little league.

He did the cello when he was younger.

He did soccer.

He helped with a sound system at church and Bible school and we really had no idea what we would be dealing with later on.

We sent him to college, to WVU and while he was there, this was his first time to be away from home.

How we found out, is that Ryan had a car wreck and he almost went off a bridge.

And he began to tell us what he was dealing with, addiction.

Within one month he had the car wreck, and then directly after that he overdosed in our kitchen.

Back at that time, we didn't have Naloxone but the paramedics were able to get here to be able to do that and to save his life.

I thought he was just like other kids, partying a little too much.

I had no idea what we were dealing with.

And he went to a party and he was drinking.

And at that party he wasn't able to make good decisions, because he'd had too much to drink.

And someone asked him to smoke heroin.

I had no idea that you could even smoke heroin, but you can.

And when that happened that was too late.

My friend, she's a clinical social worker, retired and one of the things she said to me, she says, "You know, he was probably addicted from that very first time."

"You've turned on that switch and that's it."

He was working.

He had a hard time holding down jobs, because of the substance use disorder.

He had, oh gosh, three other overdoses here at home, before he had the last one.

And that's one of the things that we didn't find out until after he died, that dental surgery and also with young people, sports injuries, those are the two areas for parents to watch out for.

When you're taking at least five, over five days, then it's a high risk for someone to begin to become addicted.

From the very moment that we lost him, I said "I don't want one more person to die."

We went to a meeting and there was a man there and heard our story.

He was in recovery and he said to us, and you know, it's interesting the people in recovery are the ones that actually help us, (chuckling) but he said to us, he said, "Your son's death was preventable."

And that's what I needed to trigger that in me to know that, okay, now that I know that it's preventable, then there's something I can do.

I began to get involved.

I began to listen to what people were saying and started doing some research to see what other people were doing.

Contacting people across the country, because I knew that we weren't the only ones in this boat and it's important to support people in the community and what they're doing.

And that's kind of how we did that, is we started networking and building, just building relationships.

I started seeing that other areas were having an International Overdose Awareness Day.

And I was looking around to see if somebody was gonna do it locally.

And I didn't see that.

I was sitting on the couch and I thought, you know what?

You can stay sitting down or you can get up.

It's a choice too.

And that's what we did.

We decided to have this event.

So our structure, how I organized it at first, the first part was remembering those we've lost.

And the second part is honoring family and friends.

And the last part is about hope.

Those of us that were left, we had a life to live and needed hope to do that.

Finding a group of people that will listen to you, support you no matter what.

I think it's really important to do that.