

PA Overdose Prevention Campaign

Susan Kelly *My Son Daniel's Story*

My name is Susan Kelly and my son Daniel died from an accidental drug overdose on July 14th 2005, shortly after his 23rd birthday.

Dan was an extremely talented musician in the prime of his life. He played guitar and had a great singing voice. He had a real musical talent that shot from the hip and came gushing out through his soul. He was a free spirit, creative, kind-hearted and jovial. He was dependable for a laugh and demanded a smile. Friends described Dan as a jester-- a singing, dancing, laughing, boisterous fixture unhindered by what others thought of him.

He was very intelligent and had so much potential for his life. Dan's private tutor for advanced calculus and physics was intrigued by the fact that Dan solved problems on his own using unique, never-before-found methods. Unique is a great word to describe Dan although unfortunately his situation was anything but unique. Fatal heroin overdoses are an epidemic in this country and our state. More than 12,000 people have died in Pennsylvania from accidental drug overdoses since 2001; over 1600 died in 2010 alone.

Dan had been struggling with addiction to heroin for several years. Dan wanted more than anything to recover from his addiction. He had tried rehabilitation centers and "fought the war against his demon". I believe wholeheartedly that his death could have been prevented. The people with whom Dan was using drugs that day knew something was wrong, but they didn't have access to naloxone, a medicine that reverses opiate overdose, to give to Dan. They were also afraid to call 911 for fear of being prosecuted on drug charges. They eventually brought him to the hospital, dropped him off in the parking lot and drove away, but it was far too late.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that naloxone distribution programs across the country have saved more than 10,000 lives by laypeople administering naloxone to people overdosing on opiates. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that allow more people to have access to this life-saving medication, so that those suffering from addiction can have an overdose reversed to live to accept treatment if they wish.

I share my son's story in hopes that other lives may be saved with the passage of legislation in Pennsylvania that will increase access to naloxone and Good Samaritan bills that would provide immunity from prosecution when calling 911 to report an overdose. In my son's honor, I ask that you support to help save lives and prevent fatal drug overdoses.

