DUSTIN BATDORFF INVITATIONAL

DROPKICK ADDICTION

MAY 30, 2014

DBi 3

SOLACE

Surviving Our Loss And Continuing Everyday

To Whom It May Concern:

We at S.O.L.A.C.E. of Stark County would like to thank you for your generous donation TO OUR ONLY FUNDRAISER, the "Dropkick Addiction" Pro Wrestling Event. Your donation also helps in many other ways:

- Drug Take Back Days have been implemented and have netted over 5300 pounds of unwanted or unused prescription drugs.
- The Stark County Anti-Drug Coalition and Opiate Task Force of Stark County and S.O.L.A.C.E. are working together to establish permanent drug collection boxes.
- We have also this past year, sponsored billboards to get our message out.
- There are speaking engagements at nearly every Stark County High School in which Mr. Batdorff tells his very personal story of the loss of his son to a drug overdose.
- Town Hall meetings have been conducted throughout the year with a number of speakers from all over Ohio telling their stories.
- A "Day of Remembrance" and Candlelight Vigil is held every year
- We are involved in State and Federal Programs, meetings, and even participated this year in the Governor's "State of the State" address.

And numerous others ways.....

Your donation will help support our cause.

GOLD - $500+ - 6 Gold Entry Tickets, included in large poster advertising and digital program
SILVER - $250+ - 4 Gold Entry Tickets, included in small poster advertising and digital program
BRONZE - $125+ - 2 Gold Entry Tickets and included in digital program
Gold Entry Tickets include pasta dinner, (5) Raffle Tickets, T-shirt, and VIP Seating

All other donations will be included in the digital program.

Thanks again,

Dale Batdorff 330-323-7605 dale@dolphinelectric.us

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http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20120524/NEWS/305249898
http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20111016/NEWS/310169955
http://www.ohio.com/news/local/schools-adopt-governor-s-push-to-combat-addiction-1.469275

P.O. Box 387 * Uniontown, OH 44685
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Ohio, like most of the states in the country, is struggling with a prescription drug abuse epidemic. Ohio has experienced a 335% increase in the death rate due to unintentional drug poisoning, in just the past 10 years. Despite this overwhelming statistic, many in our community of Stark County feel protected...surely this won't happen to us. But unfortunately, it did happen to us. On September 25, 2011 a young man, Dustin Batdorff, died as a result of an unintentional drug poisoning.

It was a tragedy that his parents, sibling and extended family and now a community are determined will not happen to anyone else. Dustin's death has proven to be a catalyst for change and prevention in Stark County. From his obituary to the very public telling of his life story, Dustin's parents, Dale and Terrie Batdorff, have become the faces of prescription drug abuse prevention in Stark County and have helped to lift the stigma of substance abuse and addition to new levels. With their permission, five Town Hall meetings have been conducted across the county to share Dustin's story as a strategy to generate awareness, correct misunderstandings and provide education and information.

Drug Take Back Days have been implemented and have netted over 5300 pounds of unwanted or unused prescription drugs. The Stark County Anti-Drug Coalition and Opiate Task Force of Stark County and S.O.L.A.C.E. are working together to establish four permanent drug collection boxes at sites across the county to further reduce the availability of unwanted and unused prescriptions. S.O.L.A.C.E. has already donated 3 boxes and they are at sites now, one at the Louisville Police Dept, one at the Perry Township Police Dept, and one at the Stark County Sheriff's Building.

Local High School students, touched by the Batdorff family's grief and determination, have joined together to speak to their peers. They are reaching out to students at back-to-school fairs, community festivals and county fairs. These Youth Coalition members are working to stop use before it begins.

The Stark County Education Service Center has collaborated with the Stark County Anti-Drug Coalition and Mental Health and Recovery Services Board to create a unique web-based tool kit, specifically designed to answer the questions of children, parents, and educators. Dustin's family organized the first annual "Drop Kick the Addiction" professional wrestling tournament to further draw attention to the risk factors of substance abuse and as a way to underscore the need to prevent youth substance abuse and the second wrestling tournament is underway and will happen in April.

As a result of all these endeavors, preventing the non-medical use of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications is now a county wide effort and responsibility.

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Presents The 3rd Annual

DUSTIN BATDORFF INVITATIONAL

DROPKICK ADDICTION

A night of family friendly entertainment and action packed pro wrestling to promote drug awareness and raise funds for the Stark County branch of the S.O.L.A.C.E. program.

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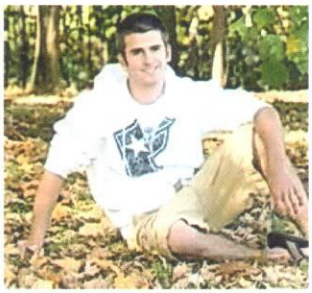
By Lisa Reicosky

October 16, 2011 12:01AM

Parents of addict share cautionary tale

Terrie and Dale Batdorff's son, Dustin, was an addict. It started with taking a friend's prescription pain killers and progressed to heroin. By sharing his story, they hope other addicts and their families will seek help.

Drug addicts and their families often avoid seeking help because of the stigma. Shame and embarrassment burden parents. Outsiders make assumptions.



PHOTO/ CANTONREP.COM / SUBMITTED

Dustin Batdorff in a 2008 photo supplied by his family.

Dale and Terrie Batdorff's son, Dustin, was a drug addict. They are not ashamed. Quite the opposite. They want to tell everyone about him.

"Dustin was a champion many times over. He excelled in life," his father said.

With his dark good looks, somewhat ornery smile and big sense of humor, Dustin Batdorff was popular at Jackson High School. He graduated in 2008.

"He was always trying to pull pranks," said Liz Cloutier, his girlfriend of four years.

He was a standout in football, baseball and wrestling. Trophies and ribbons from youth wrestling fill his bedroom shelves. With friends, poker and video games such as "Mario Party" ignited his competitive drive. Eating was another passion.

"His favorite thing ever was food. We'd go out to dinner, and he would try crazy things," Cloutier said, adding that Dustin liked to have fun but wasn't reckless. "He could walk into a room and light it up. If he had his bad days, you wouldn't know it."

The couple broke up in December, six months after Dustin moved into an apartment with his older half brother Anthony Batdorff and Dustin's best friend since second grade, D.J. Vaughn.

"Dustin was my neighbor growing up. We did everything together," Vaughn said.

By all accounts, Dustin liked to go out and have fun. Even before turning 21, he would go drinking at bars with his friends.

Vaughn realized his friend had a problem when he stopped going out. He knew Dustin took opioids — prescription pain medications such as OxyContin, Percodan and Percocet. He got them from friends and, later, off the streets. Vaughn believed that his friend spent all of his money funding his addictions.

Then in March, Vaughn and Anthony Batdorff found a needle in their apartment.

"It was the first time we really knew it was a problem," Vaughn said.

They approached Dale and Terrie Batdorff with the news, and the couple confronted their son.

"He stormed out," Dale said, "and we didn't see him for a couple weeks. We sought help, and they said you can't do anything until they want help."

Dustin took his anger out on Vaughn that day. His friend gave him space, and the two eventually made up.

But when their lease was up in August, Vaughn was ready to live elsewhere, and Dustin said he was ready to conquer his addiction, which had progressed to heroin.

"He said, 'I'm ready to get clean, but I need help,' " Vaughn recalled. "His mom was ecstatic. We're so happy. Finally, he's ready."

TYPICAL TEEN

Some would say Dustin lived a privileged life, and not just because of his Jackson Township address. His parents, married 22 years, each had an older child from first marriages. They had Dustin and then, 22 months later, another son, Nick.

Dale Batdorff, owner of Dolphin Electric, and Terrie, a nurse, built a comfortable home and life across the road from Rolling Green Golf Course.

Home movies show the family at campsites, riding dirt bikes and four-wheelers. Dale called their drives to dirt-bike riding trails "seat time." They discussed the facts of life — and everything else. They took beach vacations. Terrie often is seen chasing a laughing Dustin across the sand.

Every Christmas morning lives on tape, right up to 2010, when Dustin walked past the mounted camera, mooned it and then gave a thumbs-up — a surprise for viewers later.

Getting good grades came as easily for Dustin as athletics.

"He was an 'A' student, but he got 'B's,' " his mother said. "He did just enough to get by."

But in sports, he gave his all. He dressed with Jackson's varsity football team as a sophomore and continued to dominate in wrestling.

His junior year may have played a crucial role in what would happen later. He thought he wasn't being used in the right role in football, so he quit the team during the season.

"That gave him time to fool around," Dale said. "If I could go back, I wouldn't have let him quit."

Then came wrestling. During the first week of practice, Dustin was caught drinking. He was benched for a third of the season and told to complete community programs. Although he continued to work hard with the team in practices, he eventually quit.

His senior year, he wanted to turn things around. He was excited to get back to wrestling.

"He was all ready to go. Then, (an adminstrator) told him he couldn't participate "because he had failed to complete the community programs," Dale said. "It crushed him. It was so important to him, but Dustin made his own decisions."

COMING HOME

Whatever it was that led Dustin onto the wrong path, by August it no longer mattered. All his family cared about was that he was ready to get help.

He moved back into his parents' home. A bedroom in the basement with a separate entrance allowed him to keep his independence. He hung a Jimi Hendrix poster over decorations already on a wall, careful not to change the room too much. His stay was to be temporary.

He worked at IHOP near The Strip and planned to save money to return to Stark State College and become a firefighter.

"When he came home, he seemed so beat down," Terrie said. "He said, 'Mom, I've tried so hard to quit.'"

When he tried to stop doing drugs, he told her, he couldn't sleep. His body ached. His heart beat wildly.

He was scared and tired.

His mom called every hospital and rehabilitation program she could find. Some were full. Others wouldn't accept her insurance.

Finally, in late August, Affinity Pain Center agreed to take Dustin, though it would be Sept. 26 — a month off — before the doctor could see him.

So they waited.

Dustin contacted Cloutier, his former girlfriend. They started talking again. He told her he had a problem but was OK now.

On Sept. 21, a Wednesday, Dustin saw a doctor who confirmed he would start Suboxone treatment the following Monday. Suboxone is used to treat opioid addiction.

His friend D.J. Vaughn spent that Friday night at the Batdorffs.

"He was so happy. He couldn't wait to start Suboxone," Vaughn remembers.

On Saturday, his parents took Dustin to dinner. Later that night or early Sunday, Dustin got high for what he thought would be the last time before getting clean — what addicts call "the last ride." When Terrie Batdorff woke up Sunday morning — Sept. 25 — she saw Dustin's car in the driveway.

She was immediately alarmed. He was supposed to be at work.

"I burst into his room, and he was on the floor."

She tried CPR. "He was purple. I knew he had been dead for hours."

She called her husband, who was at Bob Evans having breakfast, his Sunday ritual. He rushed home. He remembers passing paramedics coming up stairs from

his son's room.

"I dropped to my knees and picked (Dustin) up in my arms," Dale said.

He saw the syringe on the floor nearby.

FINDING PEACE

"He was a good kid," Dale said. "We had a good life. This kid never wanted for anything.

"This reached into our home and grabbed him."

That morning, as the parents held each another and grieved for their lost son, they decided to be honest.

"This overwhelming thing overcame me. It was just overpowering," Dale said. "I said, '. . . I have to do whatever I have to do to make sure no parent has to go through this.'"

The couple spent hours crafting an obituary. Near the end, they encouraged those struggling with addiction to get help. It read: "It was Dustin's intention to start a rehabilitation program the day after he died. Please don't wait until tomorrow. Do whatever it takes to get help now."

After the obituary was published in The Repository, the family was flooded with notes from people thanking them for their bravery. Some were from parents who had lost children, others from those who still had time to save theirs.

The Batdorffs struggle with their anger. They don't blame anyone.

Dale is glad his words have led others to seek help, but he can't hide his anguish.

"I'm angry as hell. Why did it have to be our son?"

He hopes their son's death will serve as a wake-up call to his friends.

"This is it," he said. "This is how it ends."

The week after the funeral, the Batdorffs cleaned out Dustin's bedroom and found a calendar. He had marked off each passing day of September with an "X."

He had drawn a smiley face on Sept. 26.

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October 07. 2011 12:01AM

Print Page

Face loved-ones' addictions and do all you can to help

Recently a young man named Dustin Batdorff lost a battle with addictions that gripped his life. My sincerest condolences go to his parents, family and many friends.

I applaud his parents for the obituary they wrote for their dear son (Sept. 28). It takes a lot of courage to say their son had an addiction and to warn other families to do all they can to help an addicted family member.

I am writing to expand on the Batdorffs' message to parents: Please watch your children, no matter how old they are. Look for signs of a problem; talk to your kids openly about alcohol and drugs; don't be afraid.

The biggest drug dealer out there is the family medicine cabinet — oxycotine, Vicodin, Valium, the list goes on and on. Don't be afraid to put a prescription under lock and key when you are finished with it. Dispose of anything left over.

Whether we want to face it or not, heroin, crack, cocaine and other drugs are available everywhere. Heroin in my day was for hard-core addicts. Today it's mainstream and readily available.

Alcoholism and addiction don't discriminate between rich families and poor families. They aren't sensitive to your race, creed or color. They don't care if you are a man or a woman, boy or girl.

Growing up, I wanted to be a lawyer, but after my football career at Jackson High School was over, I crawled into a bottle and never pursued my dreams. For 20 years, I let my addiction and demons rule my life. Twenty-three years ago, I got sober. Now I want to help people realize that if a friend or family member has a problem, they aren't alone, they should do all they can to help them. There are great programs out there.

KENNY BELLINGER, MASSILLON

http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20111007/NEWS/310079820

Print Page

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By Lisa Reicosky

Print Page

May 24. 2012 12:01AM

Man who lost son to drugs addresses Canton South class

Dustin Batdorff, a 2008 Jackson High School graduate, died of a heroin overdose the weekend before he was scheduled to go to rehab. A school assembly — the first presented by Dustin's father, Dale Batdorff — was held as part of Batdorff's mission to prevent other parents from feeling his pain.

Canton South freshmen and sophomores sat in silence Wednesday, engrossed in an audio recording of a frantic 911 call made last September by Terrie Batdorff.

PHOTO/ CANTONREP.COM

Hannah Moauro of Canton South High School hugs Dale Batdorff after he gave a presentation. His son Dustin Batdorff died of a drug overdose.

The distraught mother was trying desperately to revive her 21-year-old son, Dustin, while begging the emergency rescue dispatcher to send help. Her cries shook the old auditorium and the minds of the young listeners.

Dustin, a 2008 Jackson High School graduate, died of a heroin overdose the weekend before he was scheduled to go to rehab.

A school assembly — the first presented by Dustin's father, Dale Batdorff — continues Batdorff's mission to prevent other parents from feeling his pain.

"The whole purpose is to get things going in their minds," he said."It did what it was supposed to do."

Students watched a memorial video of Dustin's life, the same one viewed at his funeral service. It shows him at all stages of his life — from early Christmases with his family, to his athletic events as a youth and teenager, and then as a young adult.

The video ends with the 911 call and a final scrolling script imploring those who struggle with addiction to seek help.

After the video, Dale Batdorff stood before the quiet student body and said, "Dustin Batdorff was my son."

He described how he dropped to his knees when he went into Dustin's bedroom and how he held him in his arms, praying.

"I knew my son was no longer an addict," he said of that moment.

Batdorff told the students they have to make choices. "Don't go down that aisle," he said. "You want to know how it ends? Look at the video. If it doesn't end that way, you are lucky."

OFFERING HELP

Health teacher Carl Busnick asked Batdorff to speak at his school because he wants his students to be informed.

He told them how some drugs, like marijuana and alcohol, grab you by the hand. Though difficult, he explained, you can wriggle your hand away. But opiates and heroin, he said, "shake you by the throat. You want to get away, but you can't."

The program also featured Quest Recovery Services' Kristen Petrilla and Fran Gerbig from the Stark County Anti Drug Coalition.

The video, said Gerbig, "allows us to put a face to prescription drug abuse. It's easy to get lost in statistics."

Those statistics, she said, include one that shows one of every four teens in Ohio have used opiates like OxyContin and Vicodin to get high.

When prescription drugs become unavailable, many addicts turn to heroin, she said.

Accidental overdoses have increased by 335 percent in the last 10 years and she added that here, in Stark County, 60 percent of all accidental deaths are because of prescription drug overdoses.

"We can all agree it's a problem," said Gerbig.

DANGEROUS PROGRESSION

Petrilla talked to the kids about the withdrawal symptoms she sees in her job at Quest.

"Opiate withdrawal is like the worst flu you've ever had, multiplied by 100," she said, describing the leg jitters "that make you feel like you want to crawl out of your skin. And one pill makes it go away."

The dangerous progression to heroin is made more deadly by the different purity levels of the street drug. When addicts don't know the power of their drug, overdoses are more likely.

"The odds are not in your favor. You could easily have a Dustin among you," Petrilla said. "I go to work five to six days a week to prevent this. It breaks my heart that he did not get to treatment."

The message reached students, and surprised some.

"I had no idea," said freshman Ryan Baechel about Stark County's opiate problem. "I haven't talked to my friends about it, but I've grown up around addiction. It makes me want to help."

Mike Russell, also a freshman, said watching the video made him think about his little brother and how it would affect him if addiction happened in his family.

Andrew Scarpino said the presentation was "pretty intense, pretty emotional."

The Batdorffs will continue to share their experience as part of the county's newly formed SOLACE support group (Surviving Our Loss And Continuing Everyday), as well as through the Opiate Task Force.

Paula Mastroianni from the Stark County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board sat in on the assembly. She has seen the video several times and knows the impact it can make.

"If you don't walk out of here saying, 'I'm not going to let this happen to me or any of my friends,' then you have a heart of stone," Mastroianni said.

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By Andy Harris

Print Page

June 20. 2012 12:01AM

Wrestlers look to put choke hold on addiction

It was likely the first – and possibly the last – time that well-tanned men wearing feather boas, neon-colored spandex shorts and cowboy hats paraded out onto the stage of a church to classic rock music.

It was also a night when sermons, worship songs and Bible verses were swapped for body slams, frog splashes and suplexes.

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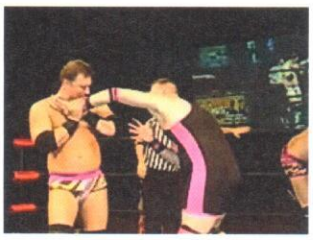

PHOTO/ COURTESY OF JOHN WINTERS II

Wrestler Anthony Batdorff, a.k.a. Juice Jennings, twists the arm of opponent "No Shame" Jimmy Shane (right) during a tag team match.

The Dustin Batdorff Invitational "Dropkick the Addiction" pro wrestling event at River Tree Christian Church was an amalgam of a good cause and one of the most unlikely events to be held in a place of worship. Two worlds that seemingly had nothing to do with one another came together in support of a good cause.

The event was a fundraiser in memory of Dustin Batdorff, a 2008 graduate of Jackson who died Sept. 25, 2011 after a year-long battle with an addiction to opiates that began with taking a friend's pain medication.

Batdorff, a standout athlete for the Polar Bears whose successes as a grappler began at an early age, died the night before he was scheduled to enter rehab for his addiction.

His story was shared before the matches began in a video comprised of old family videos and photographs showing Batdorff, his siblings and parents during happier times. The video is a tool the Batdorffs use when they speak to students and community groups on the issues of addiction and support.

His family decided the best way to honor his memory was by raising funds for the Stark County branch of the S.O.L.A.C.E. program, which stands for "Surviving Our Loss and Continuing Everyday."

The group's mission is to help those who have lost a loved one to addiction and to assist those with addiction issues in changing their lives. Nearly everyone who picked up a microphone during the night echoed that message and made sure the point was communicated.

The evening began with promo videos for six matches to take place during the night featuring local wrestlers and competitors from Ohio Championship Wrestling.

There was the "Battle of the Stache" between "Mega Star" Marion Fontaine and OCW champion Jeremy "The Butcher" Madrox, tag team matches and more singles competition and all were qualifiers for a six-man match at the end of the night to decide the champion of the event.

Prior to the first match, ring announcer John Orlando called all of the wrestlers out to the ring as the lights dimmed for a 10-bell salute to honor the memory of those who have lost their lives to any sort of addiction.

In another unique twist for a professional wrestling event, an opening prayer was offered up. Then it was time to start the action.

Three hours of wrestling entertained the crowd of more than 500, including five rows of VIP fans seated around the red-aproned ring, topped with black canvas and red turnbuckles.

Each match featured a fan favorite against a "heel" (a wrestling term for a bad guy) and plenty of shenanigans.

In the first match, Matt Taylor took to the ring and initially looked to curry crowd favor by saying what an honor it was to be part of such a special event.

"This is a great night and if we can help just one person with an addiction through this event, then it is something to be proud of," Taylor said.

However, Taylor quickly turned on the crowd by insulting their intelligence, physical conditioning and just about anything else he could think of. His tirade led to an onslaught of boos, but those boos turned to cheers when his opponent, "The Hot Commodity" Matt Mason, came through the curtain and entered the ring.

Despite Mason's attempts to skirt the rules and out-think Mason, Mason cruised to the win in his Ultimate Warrior-like ring attire and climbed the turnbuckle in each corner after the match to salute the crowd.

Another fan favorite was the tag team match between the duo of OCW tag team champions Joey Vengeance and Juice Jennings, and their opponents, "No Shame" Jimmy Shane and Robby Starr.

Jennings, the wrestling name of Dustin Batdorff's brother Anthony, came up with the idea for the event after seeing the potential of the auditorium of the church where he and his family regularly worship. The Batdroffs approach the church with the idea and received plenty of support during the planning process.

Anthony Batdorff is a fan favorite when wrestling in Northeast Ohio, but when he and Vengeance hit the road, they often find themselves with the crowd cheering against them.

With a home crowd, especially a collection of young fans seated not far from the ring, squarely on their side, Jennings and Vengeance finished off Shane with a flying elbow from the top rope followed by a high-arcing frog splash for the three-count and the pin, drawing loud cheers from the crowd. Following the match, both of the victors donned their DBI t-shirts, pointed to them and then pointed skyward in a gesture for Dustin Batdorff.

There were plenty of laughs throughout the night as well, especially in the "Battle of the Stache."

The lone man in the ring without a mustache was referee Jake Clemons, who had to endure several attempts by both Fontaine and Madrox to pull fake mustaches from their tights and slap them above his upper lip so he would be hirsute enough to properly officiate the contest. Madrox earned the win despite bending the rules by grabbing the ropes while pinning Fontaine.

There were two other components to the night, the first a spaghetti dinner held prior to the event. There was also a silent auction throughout the night, with a range of items and gift baskets up for bid in the church atrium.

An Xbox gaming system, gift baskets from local restaurants and shops and other items were auctioned off in increments of $10, with the winners announced at the end of the night.

The Batdorff family, which comprised most of the volunteer force for the night and could be identified by name tags on their shirts identifying them by their relationship to Dustin Batdorff, also sold brown-and-orange event shirts to raise money. Their message and the message of the event, beyond the submission holds, clotheslines and dropkicks, was urging anyone who knows someone with an addiction to get them the help they need before it is too late.

The final match, appropriately enough, ended with Jennings defeating Madrox by submission. It was a win for the Batdorff family in the same way they hope to assist families and individuals in gaining victory over addiction.

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Print Page

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By Ed Balint

Print Page

September 29. 2013 12:01AM

SOLACE fights drug abuse

The lives of Dale and Terrie Batdorff were forever broken when they lost their 21-year-old son to drug addiction in 2011. Since then, the couple has helped SOLACE of Stark County to support others who have lost loved ones to heroin and other drugs.

Dale Batdorff recalls hearing it distinctly: The voice of God.

It came when he was cradling his dead son. Batdorff was responding to a chilling phone call from his wife, Terrie. Dustin, 21, had collapsed on his bedroom floor, killed by heroin. Terrie called 911 and tried to revive him.

PHOTO/ CANTONREP.COM

Terrie Batdorff and Patricia Bardnell both lost sons to heroin.

Dale Batdorff came home, walking past a medic and dropping to his son. As he held the limp body, he heard the voice. A normal voice. Not low or raspy. Not booming.

It said: "You do whatever you have to do so no other parent has to go through this."

That was Sept. 25, 2011. Two years later, the Jackson Township residents continue to carry out what the husband considers to be divine instruction.

With the support and guidance of the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Stark County, Dale Batdorff has led the efforts of SOLACE — Surviving Our Loss and Continuing Everyday — of Stark County.

It's a support group for those who have lost someone to drug abuse, suicide, violence or incarceration. The group focuses on drug addiction. It also provides support for those who have a loved one battling substance abuse, and raises awareness on the devastating effects heroin and other opiates have on the community, especially youth.

October is National Substance Abuse Prevention Month. To raise the profile of the heroin problem, SOLACE has posted billboards in Stark County — including at Cleveland Avenue and 30th Street NW in Canton — that feature a sobering message: Two photos. Two young men. Both dead from heroin.

On the left is a photo of Dustin. On the right is the full-bodied smile of Alan Bardnell, who died on March 1, 2009.

SOLACE, which holds monthly meetings, has one scheduled from 6:30 to 8 p.m. for Oct. 21 at the Exploration Gateway at Sippo Lake Park (Perry Sippo Branch Library) at 5710 12th St. NW in Perry Township.

STARTING SOLACE

The local SOLACE chapter — modeled after the group of the same name in Scioto County — was established in 2012. The Mental Health and Recovery Services Board reached out to the Batdorffs, who had received an outpouring of support after the family shared their story with The Repository shortly after their son's death. Dustin's obituary included a plea for those with drug problems to get help. The son had been scheduled to begin a rehabilitation program the day after he died.

However, since its inception, the group has seen interest drop, said Jackie Pollard, director of clinical services at the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, who describes SOLACE as a "grassroots effort."

"We have just so many people out there who are losing their children or family members," Pollard said. "And there's just not really the support out there for families that they really need."

"I think the work that Dale is doing and SOLACE is doing is just a great example of how one person can really make a big difference," she said.

SPEAKING TO KIDS

Batdorff has taken his message to local schools. Some school officials have been reluctant to host Batdorff on behalf of SOLACE, rejecting the notion a drug problem exists with their students, he said.

At other schools he's been well received. The presentation is blunt and raw. A video is shown telling Dustin's story. A happy ending never comes. The video includes the 911 call. The screen is reduced to words, sound only. And the young eyes watching find out Dustin died.

Then the father walks into the quiet auditorium and shares his account. He is often showered with hugs, and students and sometimes faculty open up about friends or loved ones who have succumbed to drugs.

Following each presentation, Dale Batdorff retreats to his vehicle. Needing time alone, he takes a drive before he returns to work.

"It's the worst feeling," he said of losing a child. "It's the worst pain, it's just not normal, it's just not right in the universe."

ANOTHER PARENT, ANOTHER SON

Along the way the Batdorffs have met others with similar pain. Among them is Patricia Bardnell, a Perry Township police officer, whose late son, Alan, is one of the faces on the billboards.

"Alan was just a typical teenager," she said of the Hoover High School graduate. "He came from a very strong household — I think there's still a stigma attached that kids become addicts because they come from a bad home."

Struggling with his parents divorce, the young man turned to drugs, Bardnell said. Eventually he confessed to the addiction. Tears broke his voice. "He reached the point of desperation where he knew his life had no future," she said.

He spent time in treatment but used heroin the day after his release, she said.

Other treatment programs also didn't work, Bardnell said. He got off drugs long enough to join the Navy. Alan also attended the University of Cincinnati. At one point he stayed drug free for seven months, the mom said.

But he couldn't beat the addiction. He faded in and out of his mom's life. "You're just sick because you don't know if your child is dead or alive, and then they appear," Bardnell said.

Alan died in Cincinnati, with 19 syringes in his room, Bardnell said. Gone at age 22.

"He fought a very hard fight," she said. "But what I did not realize at the time was that the success rate of the recovery of heroin is so low — quite frankly, Alan was destined to die; there was no hope for Alan because he was not receiving the treatment."

Heroin makes the good bad, she said. Alan was "a very nice young man who came from a very solid upbringing, and he was not a dirtbag and he just succumbed to an illness..."

Like Dale and Terrie Batdorff , she wants to help others before it's too late. She also wants to speak to students, and is having a video produced about her son. "If I can save one person, then it will have been worth it," Bardnell said.

SOLACE of Stark County is still developing. The organization plans to seek non-profit status in the future so it can apply for grants. It has raised funds to purchase billboard space and three prescription drug drop-boxes — in memory of Dustin — posted at some Stark County law enforcement agencies, administered by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Dale Batdorff said.

SOLACE is there to help, said Bardnell, and it welcomes the public participation. But the stigma of heroin use keeps some people away.

The "stigma is like a cement wall we can't cross," she lamented. "And we need to get the word out there — you can come to us; we will accept you; we will help you with your pain."

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Akron system is first to take on state effort to bring opioid, heroin epidemic to forefront to help youth

Schools adopt governor's push to combat addiction

By Doug Livingston
Beacon Journal education writer

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Local authorities, Akron schools administrators and top-ranking state and city officials came together at Buchtel Community Learning Center Tuesday to kick off the state's "Start Talking" program.

The campaign's goal is to raise awareness about the "public health epidemic" of prescription opioid and heroin abuse, which accounted for a deadly overdose once every five hours in Ohio in 2011.

The program dovetails efforts presented Monday in Gov. John Kasich's State of the State Address in Medina.

Kasich said his office, the legislature and the attorney general have shut down pill mills across Ohio, but the next step is to deal with the demand.

"This is in every neighborhood," he said. "Minority communities were dealing with it alone for a long time. It knows no race. It knows no demographics. We need to build courage and strength in people to say, 'No.' "

For schools, it is indeed no longer an inner-city problem.

Along with former NFL player Deryck Toles, who grew up a victim of his parents' drug use, two parents came forward Tuesday. One spoke of his son, a "strong" and "fast" athlete from Jackson High School who died 11 months after receiving his first pain killer from a friend.

"Dustin was a good boy," Dale Batdorff said of his 21-year-old son, who died in 2011. "He never experienced drug dealing outside of school. He never saw a drug deal going down on the corner of the street. We live in Jackson Township. This evil thing reached into my home and grabbed onto my son and did not let him go until he was dead. It knows no address ... It doesn't care. This evil thing will just destroy anything it touches.

"We have to start talking."

Dick Ross, Ohio superintendent of public instruction, commended Akron schools and board president Lisa Mansfield for being the first to adopt the statewide effort, and for bringing addiction to the forefront.

From an education perspective, Ross said, addiction, whether by student or family, deprives children of an opportunity.

"Any blockage for a student to be successful in school and moving on through careers and jobs and being good citizens, it's something we have to look at," he said. "It's almost very insidious what happens."

Kasich said Monday that the Start Talking program, launched a month ago, has reached 9,000 students in the state and created 207 student ambassadors. He called on legislators to talk to their principals and superintendents about embracing the program for their own schools.

Ross echoed Kasich, citing statistics that show talking to kids about drugs cut the chance of use in half.

If that conversation is initiated by peers, the message could carry even more weight.

That's the goal of the program: to encourage student athletes and peers to be good role models, to share harrowing stories of addiction and to encourage the community to participate in the dialogue. More information can be found online at StartTalking.Ohio.Gov.

Along with program adoption, Akron schools have applied for a $1 million grant, developed by the governor and Ohio's First Lady Karen W. Kasich. The money would be used to train additional drug intervention staff, said Dan Rambler, director of Student Support Services.

The program launch was attended by Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, Carmen Ingram of the Summit County Sheriff's Drug Unit, Tracy J. Plouck with the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services and James Nice, Akron's police chief.

Nice voiced frustration about lax laws that he said allow convicted heroin and opiate dealers, who sell small but lethal quantities, to not serve mandatory jail sentences.

Nice said, "Most of the work that Akron Police Department is involved in is the result of drugs."

He praised the state and local focus on encouraging meaningful conversations with minors, nipping the problem in the bud before it leads to another criminal incident.

For Nice, though, it's an issue his officers are constantly "mopping up."

In morning staff meetings on Monday and Tuesday this week, Nice said his staff informed him of two lethal drug overdoses in the city. He followed the somber declaration by announcing that the Akron Police Department is bidding for two more positions to combat addiction: an investigator who would follow up on methamphetamine busts (no county in Ohio registers more than Summit) and another who would trace heroin and illegal opiate sales back to the dealer.

"People need to be responsible for selling heroin," he said.

Beacon Journal staff writer Stephanie Warsmith contributed to this report. Doug Livingston can be reached at 330-996-3792 or dlivingston@thebeaconjournal.com.

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http://www.ohio.com/news/local/schools-adopt-governor-s-push-to-combat-addiction-1.469275

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