

Tricia Stouch's Story: "NOPE Is, For Me, Life Saving"

A Pennsylvania mother finds friendship and comfort in NOPE Task Force after losing her daughter to a drug overdose.

After her daughter Pamela died of a drug overdose, Tricia Stouch had few places to turn in sharing her grief, until she came across NOPE Task Force on a web search.

Before long, she was doing our school and parent presentations, including her daughter's former high school. She was attending our grief support group. She was making friendships with people who understood that losing a child changes everything.

Most of all, she was grateful to a community that wanted to hear her daughter's story.

Tricia explains here:

I learned about NOPE after losing my daughter to an overdose. Pamela was 19 years old when she passed. She lost her life in under two years of abusing drugs. In my grief I needed to know what happened. I got educated on prescription medications. I came out running -- talked to school counselors and began a drug awareness program and a scholarship.

After three years, I began to realize kids needed education. I went online and found NOPE. I made contact and brought information to Beth Mingey at Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems. We began planning our first candlelight vigil for those we love and lost through substance use. Our District Attorney Jack Whelan supported us from the first vigil. Now the D.A. office and County Council sponsor our whole chapter.

In December 2014, we became the first NOPE chapter in Pennsylvania. Two of our neighboring counties have become NOPE chapters also. We have presented to 50,000 students and a couple thousand parents.

Our first presentation was at Pamela's high school. That was a bittersweet moment for me.

I share Pamela's story at presentations. Pamela left me a journal and I read her words to students. It is my way to 1) show I'm not embarrassed 2) show I'm not ashamed 3) still take care of Pamela in some way 4) educate students before they begin using 5) it gives me a place where I can grieve.

I will always be there to support NOPE any way I can. I have also studied the scripts and can moderate presentations or do the parent strategies. It has given me so much in return. I will continue to go to the NOPE overdose grief support group.

I am very thankful to Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems. They have put their heart and soul into these presentations. They do everything from contacting schools, making sure we have

literature to hand out, lugging our posters and equipment, storing our equipment and mostly their passion to save lives.

I am very grateful to the NOPE founders and staff for all they do. I am proud to be a NOPE member.

Lastly, the people and friendships I have made are irreplaceable as losing a child changes everything. I have met other mothers who lost children through this process of grieving the loss of a child.

NOPE is, for me, life saving.

If you support NOPE's mission, consider making a donation so we can expand our programs and get more speakers like Tricia Stouch. Please donate here: nopetaskforce.org/donations.php