

Palm Springs Middle Schoolers Hear Drug Stories

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PALM SPRINGS, Fla -- The blown-up pictures showed happy teens once full of life and promise. Now each one is a statistic of drug overdose. And with their smiling photos lined up on the gym walls, a drug overdose education group tried to warn kids at Palm Springs Community Middle School of the dangers of drugs.

"All the people here on boards behind you died from accidentally overdosing; they did not want to die." said Karen Perry of NOPE, Narcotic Overdose Prevention and Education, to a school wide assembly at Palm Springs Community Middle School.

The presentation came one week after nine Palm Springs Middle school students took a handout of Xanax from an older teen and all became ill. At least one student went to the hospital. Those kids were lucky, said Perry. She compared it to a similar event recently in California. "We had another story where an older girl handed out 21 methadone pills and all the kids got sick and we lost two of them. Palm Springs is very,very fortunate."

Perry has had her own share of drug experience. Her son Richard overdosed and died at age 21. She told WPBF's Terri Parker she wishes someone had made a call to alert her to his drug use before it was too late.

At this assembly, Perry asked the students to stand up if they knew anyone who uses drugs. Most stood. And then Perry instructed them: "Please remain standing if you've told anyone ." In a wave of movement, most of the students sat back down. Perry congratulated the remaining few standing, and called them "heroes" who might have saved a friend's life.

Perry said the message is don't keep your friends drug use a secret, or they could end up like 15-year-old Josh. "Josh died from a methadone overdose on his mother's birthday." Perry told the students in a somber voice.

Will this graphic lesson make a difference one week after a Xanax scare? Principal Sandra Jinks said she believes it will."I think it will because people were shocked when the students did that. I think this will have an impact on them "

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