

CBS 12's Extraordinary People: NOPE Task Force

Posted by Michele Wright / CBS 12



WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.--Every day people in our neighborhoods silently struggle. Struggle to live, pay bills and put food on the table. Year by year, many of those turn to drugs as a means to cope. In Palm Beach County the number of deaths because of drug overdose are rising at an alarming rate. Families torn apart. Karen Perry knows this all too well.

"In 2003 our family suffered the devastating loss of our son Rich to an accidental drug overdose. He was the oldest child of 2 brothers and 1 sister. He was 21 years old."

Karen tells CBS 12's Michele Wright, how proud she, her husband and they family were of Richie. Like any normal home, they taught their children to never drink alcohol or take drugs.

"When he was about 15, we learned that he had gone out and started smoking pot with some of his friends. And that led to alcohol. So by the time he went off to college he started to really develop an addiction."



Unfortunately drug use continued into college, but Rich finally realized and told his parents he needed help. They got him into treatment and thought he was finally on the right track.

"I spoke to him and it was 11:57. I was in the car at the time. At the end of our conversation he said I love you mom. I said I love you too Richie and that is the last time I spoke to my son."

As the Executive Director of [NOPE](#), Karen along with her staff are reaching communities through prevention, education for the [Narcotics Overdose Prevention Education Task Force](#). Teaming up with volunteers, partnering with law enforcement agencies, businesses and community organizations, they give student presentations and hold annual candlelight vigils. The hope is to remove the stigmas and strengthen communities.

"This is a national problem. We lose over 30,000 people a year. Nationally we lose 100 people a

day due to drug overdose."

"We've been provided over 130,000 worth of scholarships from Hanley and Karen Centers and other treatment facilities in the community. They do free assessments and help get people into the right treatment. Our seminars and workshops empower youth to become peer advocates. To speak up and be the hero. To tell someone if their friends are using drugs and alcohol."

Karen says they can't fight this disease alone. They always need volunteers, funding and sponsorships.

With over 12 [NOPE](#) chapters across the US and with the support of Sheriff Ric Bradshaw, State Attorney Pam Bondi and White House Drug Czar Gil Kerlikowske's war on drugs, Karen says there is hope.

"We can't tell you how much we appreciate the support of WPEC over the years has tremendously supported our organization by getting the message out."

"Early intervention, early treatment is key to a successful recovery."

SAVE THE DATE: Join NOPE for their "Grease Lighting" benefit at the Jupiter Hills Club in Tequesta on Saturday, March 23, 2013. If you'd like to become a sponsor, donate an auction gift item or purchase a ticket go online [HERE](#) or call 561-478-1055 ext. #203.

Volunteer, [Host a Candlelight vigil](#) & Get Involved today!

- [Donations](#)
- [Presentations & Events](#)
- [Lock `Em Up](#)
- [Start a Chapter](#)

Whether you're an adult, young person or a parent of a young person seeking advice or needing to ask a question or speak to someone about drugs or alcohol, Adam and Amy are here to help. Click [HERE](#)

Find a local treatment center [HERE](#)

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