

Hundreds attend drug overdose candlelight vigil in Largo



Roughly 1,000 people gathered at Largo Central Park for a the Third Annual National Candlelight Vigil to remember loved ones who have died of a drug overdose.

By [Laurie Davison](#), Reporter

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LARGO --

Organizers of a candlelight vigil in Largo on Wednesday night say the sheer number of those who attended shows their reason for holding the vigil is a growing problem in the community.

Roughly 1,000 people gathered at Largo Central Park for a the Third Annual National Candlelight Vigil to remember loved ones who have died of a drug overdose.

There were few empty seats and few dry eyes as those who lost loved ones to drug overdose shared their stories of loss at the Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education (N.O.P.E) vigil.

Charlotte Fox said she knew her son, Matthew, had a problem with prescription pain pill, but she was ashamed to admit it.



"I allowed my own pride to kill my son," Fox said. "Yeah, it's true. I'm a teacher. I have certain standing in the community. I (still) wouldn't admit my son's need for help. I kept it all very hush-hush."

A board lined with pictures showed those who have been lost -- many in their teens and early twenties.

Landon Korabek mixed Vicodin and Xanax and died at 17. His mother, Susan, said it may have been his first time experimenting with the drugs.

"He had some other challenges, but certainly we had no clue or thought it was prescription drugs. That's what it turned out to be," Korabek said.

Fox and Korabek said if their stories save even one life, their children didn't die in vain.

Law enforcement officials have said prescription drug abuse an "epidemic" that is even more frightening than crack or powdered cocaine.

"People get addicted to these drugs who wouldn't. They get in a car wreck (or) they have a job-related injury, they go to the doctor and get that drug prescribed and they can't give it up," Pinellas County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Bob Gualtieri said.

A state prosecutor at the vigil told the crowd the community can't just arrest their way out of the problem. He said schools, law enforcement, the medical community and parents have to focus on prevention and education.

Bay News 9's Al Ruechel was the master of ceremonies for the vigil.

Bay News 9 will air a town hall meeting on prescription drug addiction and usage as part of A&E's television series 'Intervention'.

The town hall meeting will air at 8 p.m. Sunday on **Bay News 9**