

CBS12's Extraordinary People: NOPE volunteer helps community honor those lost to or suffering from addiction

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WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.-- According to Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education group also known as the **NOPE Task Force**, 100 people die every day of drug overdoses.

In this week's Extraordinary People, we spotlight a dedicated volunteer helping to bring awareness, educate the public and provide love & support to those in need.

Kristen Perry has been the Director of Operations for six years. NOPE Director Karen Perry says "Kristen has been a treasure. She is gifted with compassion and a heart of gold!".

On Thursday, October 29, NOPE Task Force (Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education) hosted its Ninth Annual Candle Light Vigil in West Palm Beach and in more than 55 cities across the U.S. to change the stigma of drug addiction and honor those who have died from drug overdoses.

Michael Botticelli, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, gave the keynote address via video to discuss the importance of drug prevention and education. **Dave Aronberg**, Palm Beach County State Attorney, will speak about local efforts to fight drug abuse. **CBS12/CW34 News Anchor Michele Wright**, served as Emcee for a 5th year.

The vigil was hosted at **Kravis Center** in West Palm Beach, where 300-500 people attended. A memorial wall at the vigil will showed more than 500 photos, which represent some of the estimated 38,000 people who die every year of drug overdoses.

The candle light vigils show families love for their children regardless of the fact that their children died from addiction, or drug overdose. NOPE wants addiction to be treated as a disease and encourages people to treat those who are addicted to drugs with respect, love and dignity so those in need can seek help.

NOPE educates children in schools on drug prevention. The organization teaches children and adults how to look for signs of drug addiction and drug use so if someone sees a child in trouble they can act appropriately and help. NOPE's prevention program involves law enforcement and all sectors of communities to recognize the signs of intervening early. The organization discusses the need for parents and the community to get involved early and break away from the stereotype that, kids don't listen.

"The key to drug prevention is community awareness," said Karen Perry, executive director of NOPE Task Force. "Many lives have been destroyed by substance abuse and the disease of addiction."

Perry added: "Too often, this disease is perceived as deserved and shameful, leaving families and friends to grieve in silence or an addict alone to struggle to recover. Only through awareness and openness we can eliminate the stigma that has followed the disease of addiction, opening the doors to recovery."•

ABOUT NOPE Task Force (NARCOTICS OVERDOSE PREVENTION & EDUCATION)

The NOPE Task Force is comprised of local law enforcement officials, addiction and parenting specialists, and most importantly, parents and family members who have lost loved ones to an accidental overdose or drug and alcohol related incidents. NOPE works to save lives through dramatic personal presentations about the deadly

consequences of drug abuse combined with ongoing efforts to influence anti-drug legislation and the provision of vital information about where young people with a substance abuse problem-and their families-can go for help.

For more information about NOPE or the Candle Light Vigil, go to www.nopetaskforce.org or call NOPE at 561-478-1055

If you know an extraordinary person or extraordinary people making a positive difference in South Florida, email [Michele Wright](mailto:mwright@cbs12.com) at mwright@cbs12.com, tweet her [HERE](#) or submit your nomination on-line below. We'd love to hear about it.