

Vigils Bring Communities Together to Honor Those Lost and Struggling With Disease of Addiction

As more horrifying drugs flood communities across our nations, NOPE Candle Light Vigils bring families together to learn about drug-related deaths and understand the disease of addiction.

Heroin.

Highly potent marijuana.

Bath salts.

Something called "Pink."

These are among the horrifying drugs available to teenagers today.

Parents – now is the time to educate your kids about these dangerous drugs -- many of them likely available to your kids at school or close to where you live. Some of these drugs can kill your son or daughter in a matter of hours, even minutes.

In October, we encouraged families to attend a NOPE National Candle Light Vigil near their homes. There, they learned first-hand about drug-related deaths and understood the importance of opening the doors to recovery by eliminating the prejudice that has followed addiction -- a disease that shows no prejudice to any walk of life or background.

We asked two organizers of vigils in Connecticut and North Carolina to explain the importance of the vigils in their communities.

Let's start with Sophia Molina who helped organize the vigil in Enfield, CT. Here's what she told us:

"This year we hope to bring the community together again for this very prevalent issue. So many families around our community, and in our surrounding towns, have been hit hard with the heroin epidemic.

For a long time, people have wanted to keep this problem as quiet as possible. We are learning to come together and use the pain some of us have gone through to help others. We can share our own experiences to help others.

What's better than getting our community to get together and 'shed some light' on this problem. We have a lot of people who have lost someone or still have someone close to them struggling with the disease. So we hope to bring everyone together, hand in hand, and spread love, hope and the possibility that recovery may help in a big way.

We are grateful to be part of the NOPE vigil and the nationwide groups of people like us that want to just help in any way we can. Thank you for your foundations help and support."

We also asked Jessica Pinti, the collegiate recovery community coordinator at UNC Charlotte Center for Wellness Promotion, to explain what the vigil in Charlotte accomplished. Here's what she told us:

"The Center for Wellness Promotion Collegiate Recovery Community is organizing the NOPE Vigil to promote awareness and create empathy in our community around the issue that can be highly stigmatized. We believe that it is a time to come together and honor those who have lost their fight with addiction, and support one another on a larger level. We hope that once the message is heard, it will be compelling enough for individuals who may need treatment to seek it. Treatment facilities will be hosting tables at the event, and provide opportunities for individuals to get the specialized care they may need.

There has been an increase in heroin use and fatal overdoses in the Charlotte community, and across the country, and the impacts continue to increase overtime. The vigil provides an opportunity for education and understanding of the impacts that narcotics can have on a person, a family and a community at large. It also provides encouragement to those who may need help to take a courageous step and reach out help. College students are at a higher risk for experimenting with substances and this vigil can provide prevention, or awareness to the risk of substance use.

This is the third time that a NOPE vigil has been held on UNC Charlotte's campus. The last vigil was described by an attendee as "Powerful... the room was captured by the stories and hearts moved for the cause." The lighting of the candles unified the group and it was a heartbreaking beautiful moment. At the conclusion of the program, resources were given to many attendees and the Center for Wellness Promotion staff feel like the event was a success. The vigil has promoted awareness and brought support from the surrounding community onto campus, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte."

NOPE has been organizing these vigils during the last week of October for a number of years now. Thousands of people from across the United States and Canada have attended the vigils to remember those lost and those suffering from substance abuse.

Learn more about our vigils here: nopetaskforce.org/about-vigils.php

And join us next year in organizing a vigil in your community.