

# ***NEWS FROM....***

## **The Courage to Speak® Foundation**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **THE 12<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL IAN JAMES EACCARINO MEMORIAL 9 MILE RACE AND 5K HEALTH WALK**

Ginger Katz, CEO and Founder of The Courage to Speak® Foundation and author of *Sunny's Story*, announced the **12<sup>th</sup> Annual Ian James Eaccarino Memorial 9-Mile Race and 5K Health Walk** on Saturday, July 24th at 8am at Calf Pasture Beach in Norwalk sponsored by The Lightfoot Running Club, the Parks and Recreation Department of Norwalk, Booth Financial, WSTC1400/WNLK1350, and William and Sandra Bennett.

Ginger and her husband, Larry, have been members of the Lightfoot Running Club for over 27 years and are co-founders of The Courage to Speak Foundation. The running club suggested this race be dedicated in Ian's memory, because he worked at the beach the summer before he died. He personally planted many of the trees that are now aligned with this beautiful beach.

Last year, over 250 runners participated in this extraordinary community race. A plaque was given to Lindsey Russo of Norwalk, at age 16; she crossed the finish line as the youngest participant in the race to underscore the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Lindsay was also the first female to finish the race, with a time of 1:05, which was a personal best for the young athlete.

Ms. Katz remains committed to the race and to the prevention of drug abuse among our youth. A little over 13 years ago, Ginger was a new member of the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce, a commissioner on the Norwalk Planning Commission, a wife and mother of two children. Her son Ian had just graduated from Norwalk High School and started college. In February 1996, he called home asking for help. Ian had become addicted to drugs and couldn't stop. He left school and came home.

In September 1996, Ian transferred to UCONN, and on Tuesday, September 10, he died of a drug overdose. Addiction does not discriminate. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what race you are, how financially sound you are, or if you have a family who loves you dearly. Sadly, it can happen to anyone.

After Ian's death, Ian's former principal, Dewey Amos at Norwalk High School and Ginger's priest from St. Thomas Church, asked her to speak to children and parents in the community about what had happened and how simply Ian's life could have been saved. Since then, Ginger and her husband, Larry together have presented their story to over a million people across the country and been recognized on a national level for their work.

The Courage to Speak Foundation has developed drug prevention curricula, taught in our Norwalk schools and beyond and *Courage to Speak - Courageous Parenting 101™* a free course that educates parents on how to keep their children safe from drugs. Hundreds of parents in many CT communities have already attended and 46 facilitators have been trained in Norwalk and throughout the state of Connecticut to teach the course.

The race entry fee is \$7. For information about sponsoring the race, running in the race and volunteering, e-mail [gkatz@couragetospeak.org](mailto:gkatz@couragetospeak.org) or call Ginger Katz at 1-877-431-3295.

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