

Norwalk

Norwalk Mom Dreams of an Army Battling Drug Abuse

by [Joseph Cole](#) 07/06/11



Larry and Ginger Katz have several gardens at their Norwalk home. One is dedicated to Ian James Eaccarino.

Norwalker Ginger Katz, with the support of her husband Larry, wants to raise an army. It is her goal — her wish — to see a battalion of mothers shout out in one singular voice that they will not be silent about the ravages of drug addiction.

“Could you imagine if all of the moms who lost a child to addiction got together, how powerful that would be?” Ginger says on her patio on a warm summer Sunday. A few feet away, Larry listens to his wife talk about their family's tragedy and the organization born from her tears: [the Courage to Speak Foundation](#). She says, “Wouldn't that be incredible? There are a lot of mothers out there who have been through this, and they're fighting mad.”

Through the foundation, Ginger has spoken to hundreds of thousands of teens about addiction. She has a book, [“Sunny's Story,”](#) and an educational program [entering school curriculums](#) around the country. Grants and donations fund an outreach program spanning 22 states and growing. Ginger even has a regiment of 79 instructors for her [Courageous Parenting 101](#) courses.

All of it is geared toward the goal of preventing another family from going through what she went through in September 1996. That was when her son, Larry's stepson, Ian James Eaccarino, used heroine for the last time. He died that night.

"They heard me screaming for help two streets over," Ginger says of finding her son dead from a drug overdose. Decades and thousands of talks later, she still pauses at the memory. "It's not a feeling that ever really fully goes away," she says, a slight waver breaking through her defiance.

The Katz backyard is filled with gardens, and around the corner from the patio is one that Ginger calls Ian's garden. The second-story window that overlooks it was Ian's room.

Doctor's encouraged Ginger and Larry to tell people that Ian suffered an aneurysm or a heart attack — anything but the truth. "That's just how it was. People didn't talk about addiction," Larry says.

That didn't sit well with Ginger. "I never lied about Ian in life, I wasn't going to start lying about his death. I was always proud of him," she says.

Ginger intends to keep moving forward with the foundation. She wants a copy of "Sunny's Story" on every family kitchen table in the country. She wants parents to speak to their children and for the children to speak to the adults in their lives. She wants that army of mothers speaking out.

"I'm not a hero," Ginger says. "I'm just a mother who has a vision."

About The Courage to Speak® Foundation:

The Courage To Speak Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Norwalk, CT, whose mission is "to save lives by empowering youth to be drug free through fostering education and open communication about the dangers of drug and alcohol use." Ginger Katz founded the organization in 1996, just months after her 20 year old son Ian James Eaccarino died of an accidental drug overdose. She and her husband Larry Katz pledged that they would do all they could to help prevent such a tragedy from befalling another family. Since then, Ms. Katz has given nearly 1000 presentations reaching hundreds of thousands of individuals - young people and the adults who care about them. The Courage To Speak Foundation develops drug prevention curriculum for elementary, middle and high school students as well as parents through *Courage to Speak - Courageous Parenting 101*®. Ms. Katz also has authored a book called *Sunny's Story*. A book for children of all ages; parents, grandparents, teachers, and others. www.couragetospeak.org and www.sunnysstory.com