

CADCA Book Club

In *Sunny's Story*, author Ginger Katz is the voice of her voiceless son and their family beagle, Sunny. In simple, but descriptive prose, Ginger lets Sunny tell the story of their beloved Ian's experimentation with cigarettes, drugs and alcohol and its tragic consequences.

"I was sleeping on the floor in Ginger and Larry's room so I wouldn't feel scared at night without Ian. In the middle of the night, I heard Ginger crying. Her heart was broken. "I can't go to the funeral tomorrow," she sobbed. "I can't face it..."

But Ginger did face it. Encouraged by the family doctor to tell family and friends that Ian died of a heart attack rather than an overdose, Ginger refused to lie and told people the truth. She turned Ian's bedroom into the office for The Courage to Speak® Foundation and wrote the 38-page *Sunny's Story* from there, too.

Sunny's Story is part of the curriculum for schools in Ginger's neighborhood in Norwalk, Conn., and she hopes to get the book on the reading lists and curricula of every school in the country. She and her husband Larry do speaking engagements often, but *Sunny's Story* has been only a word-of-mouth promotion.

Children can sometimes relate to man's best friend better than an adult teaching about substance abuse, Ginger said. "I knew in my heart that this book would save lives," she said, subtitling the book "*How*

to save a young life."

Ian's story proves that substance abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of their upbringing or background, Ginger said.

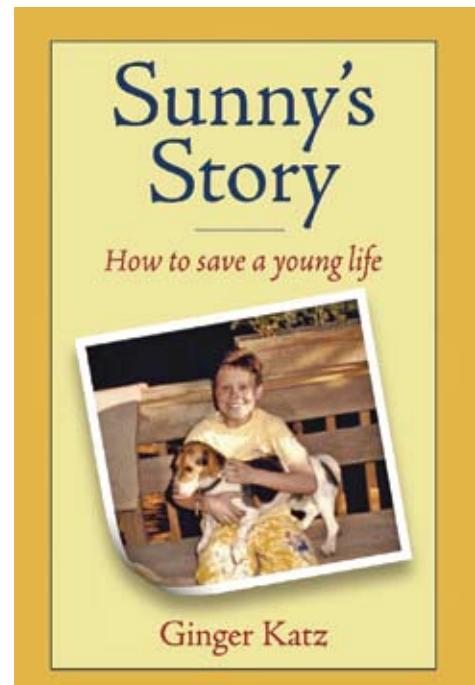
Salvatore J. Corda, Ph.D Superintendent of Schools, Norwalk Public Schools, endorses the book on its back cover: "Ian's story, told through the eyes of his dog, Sunny, will help children understand how even "good kids" can fall prey to the lure of drugs. Ian's tragically lost life is still doing good by the commitment of his parents to help young people and their parents understand that the danger never stops and having the courage to face the hard issues is the only way to keep our children safe."

The book, filled with vivid pictures of Ian's equally colorful life, has been a student favorite, Ginger said. "Kids are taking *Sunny's Story* home without permission. It's got to get into more schools and into more hands of our children."

Accompanying curriculum for grades 4th-6th is available through the foundation, but middle and high school students also tell their teachers they enjoy the story.

"Readers don't think it would happen to Ian. He was loving, he had a dog, he had a loving family, he was good in sports, he graduated, he went to college," Ginger said.

"Ian was a good kid, but he made an unhealthy decision to use drugs," she added.



Ian had moved back home, resolute to make treatment work first thing the next morning. "Ian rocked me to sleep with his words 'Mom, I'm going to rehab, I'm going to take care of this in the morning,'" Ginger said. She slept more peacefully and deeply than she had in years with that thought.

While Ginger slept upstairs, Ian snorted one last time before he went to sleep. He never awakened. Sunny, who had difficulty climbing stairs, woke Ginger up to try to help Ian one last time, but it was too late. Their boy, now 20, was gone.

Ginger Katz shares with us the importance of having the "Courage to Speak®" with our children about drug and alcohol use and abuse. Sunny shares her own courageous and honest tale from going home with Ian when he was 7 years old to being with Ian during his final moments. "*We are all very sad because once we had the best boy in the world,*" Sunny tells readers.

Sunny's Story, self-published, can be ordered at www.couragetospeak.org or www.sunnystory.com. ■