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Addiction Kills Kids: Son's Death Gives Mom "Courage to Speak"

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Son's Death Gives Mom 'Courage to Speak'

The story of the death of 20 year-old Ian Katz is sad, shocking, and one every parent, 'tween, and teen should hear.

On Thursday, Jan. 28, Ginger Katz of Norwalk, founder of The Courage to Speak Foundation, will be here to discuss how failure to communicate the dangers of drug- and alcohol abuse aided and abetted the loss of her son's young life. The free talk is sponsored by Guilford Youth & Family Services (GYFS) and takes place at 7 p.m. in the Guilford Free Library.

Katz's powerful presentation is aimed at getting parents and their kids talking before it's too late, said GYFS Program Coordinator Karolin Regan.

"She tells the story of what led to the loss of her son in 1996. By his sophomore year in college, he was snorting heroin. What's really sad is that, the night before he died, he told his mom he realized he wanted to make some changes in his life," said Regan.

Frank talk about death and addiction is an activity in which most families don't generally engage and there's no question some parts of Katz's talk will be difficult for parents and their kids to hear. But Katz is skilled at broaching the subject across all generations, said Regan.

"She wrote a book for kids, *Sunny's Story*, that tells about Ian's life through the eyes of his dog," Regan said. "She's done over 1,000 presentations for all types of groups."

GYFS is prepared to take the discussion several steps further with a follow-up series of parent-only workshops in February.

"The difference with this is the follow-up we've planned. We're bringing in trained facilitators from The Courage to Speak to run the workshops in February," said Regan.

Katz's Jan. 28 presentation and February workshops are sponsored by GYFS and free to Guilford residents. Kids in grade 6 and up are welcome to the

Jan. 28 event with their parents, but the February workshops are for parents only, Regan stressed.

"We're fortunate enough to be able to bring Ginger Katz and the Courage to Speak [facilitators] here to help us educate the community. The earlier you can speak with your kids regarding these topics, the more likely they'll have the tools they'll need to deal with it," said Regan.

Ginger Katz, (www.couragetospeak.org), will speak to parents and kids grade 6 and up on Thursday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m. at the Guilford Free Library, 67 Park Street. Parents are also encouraged to sign up for four Courage to Speak-Courageous Parenting 101 follow-up workshops, Thursdays Feb. 4, 11, 18, and 25 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Guilford Free Library. All programs are free and sponsored by Guilford Youth & Family Services.

Advanced registration is requested; call 203-453-8047 or email ritchies@ci.guilford.ct.us.

Visit www.couragetospeak.org