

The Hour

Katzes take drug crusade to the Internet

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NORWALK — Anti-drug advocates Ginger and Larry Katz have launched a new Web site to help parents learn how to talk to their children about drugs, as well as spot signs that their children may already be experimenting with drugs.

In the past, the Courage to Speak Foundation, founded by Ginger and Larry, has developed programs for middle and high school students taught by health educators which offer information on resisting peer pressure, the dangers of using drugs and how to help a friend who is addicted.

Now they are targeting parents with their new Web site at www.couragetospeak.org. The site helps parents translate the verbal and physical cues their child may be giving that could indicate drug use. It also provides suggestions for talking to their children and suggestions for how parents can become more active in their children's' lives.

"A lot of times parents keep silent about drug use because they don't know what to do or they feel embarrassed because they think if their child is involved with drugs it means they are a bad parent," Ginger Katz said. "For many parents the world of drug use is a brand new world to them and they don't know what to do."

Katz would know that feeling better than most parents. Since she lost her son in 1996 to a heroin overdose, Katz has dedicated herself to making sure that another family doesn't suffer the pain hers did when they realized that Ian's experimentation with drugs ultimately killed him.

Katz already receives dozens of e-mails daily from parents who, like her, are distraught at learning their child has become addicted to drugs. The Web site has increased the number of hits Katz receives from parents just asking for help.

"I am getting more hits than ever before," she said. "By adding this information to the Web site, we are expanding our reach beyond the individuals who can come hear us talk in person about Ian."

In addition to providing information on communicating with their children, the Web site also directs parents to clinics and rehab centers in their area that treat drug addiction. The Courage to Speak Web site is also a link on several other Web sites including Partnership for a Drug Free American and the United Nations.

"I'm honored because we've worked very hard for 10 years to reach out to families and children and now it's really kicking in," Katz said.

For more information visit www.couragetospeak.org or e-mail Katz at GKCourage@aol.com