

'One Dose Can Hook You,' Mom Tells Crowd

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Danielle earned A's and B's at Franklin High School, held a job and participated in youth group. When she reached her senior year, she says she got bored.

"I wanted a change. I wanted to have some excitement in my life," the 20-year-old said. She tried alcohol and drugs and was hooked on heroin within months.

"I was doing it at school. I was doing it in the bathroom. I was doing it in my car. ...I didn't care anymore," she said.

Danielle, who didn't give her last name, shared her story of addiction and ongoing recovery Thursday at a town hall meeting organized by the Save Our Youth Task Force.

Doug Noble, also in recovery, started smoking cigarettes the summer after fifth grade. By sixth grade, he was smoking marijuana and encouraging friends to try it. He never turned to heroin or "hard drugs." Doug stuck with alcohol and pot.

His parents caught him. He even got kicked out of the house at age 16. One morning, back home again, his mom intervened for good.

"It turned into the worst argument we ever had," Doug said. "I think the last two words I said to my parents that day were F.U." They placed him in a long-term treatment center, and he stopped fighting.

"I just got sick and tired of being sick and tired," he said. Now a University of Michigan senior, he's been sober since Sept. 17, 2001.

The town hall meeting was the first event for the four-month-old task force. It drew nearly 300 people to city hall, many of them high school students.

He 'Never Had a Chance'

Diane Montes of Livonia talked about finding her 22-year-old son Brian's stiff, cold body in his bedroom in June.

"As soon as I touched him, I knew he was dead," she said. Brian had been using heroin for five to six weeks.

"Young people need to know they cannot experiment with this drug. One dose can hook you," Montes said. An autopsy revealed the last dose Brian used was pure Fentanyl, a pain killer often mixed with heroin or cocaine to extend the drug, and potentially fatal. "Our son never had a chance."

Montes wondered: What would make him think of doing heroin? Who does heroin? Her concern led to forming the task force, to look for solutions and make people aware.

Although alcohol and marijuana are still the primary drugs high schoolers use, “to a growing number of kids ... cocaine and heroin aren't necessarily the scary drugs they were years ago,” said Dennis Hinze, student assistance coordinator at Stevenson High School.

Danielle started out by snorting heroin. Then she began shooting up.

But she kept her job and 9 p.m. curfew because she didn't want to get caught.

“I made every effort to keep it off (my parents') radar,” she said.

Friends knew, though, just like in Brian Montes' case.

Tell Someone

“Don't be afraid to tell someone,” Diane Montes told the crowd. “Young people cannot (beat addiction) themselves. They need help.”

“We all need to have help and not feel ashamed to ask for it,” added Doug's mom, Ellie Noble. “All of us have to decide we're not going to care about the reaction, we're going to do what is right.”

The panel also included Ron Harrison, a treatment provider for 25 years; Dr. Michael Calice, director of the emergency center at St. Mary Mercy Hospital; and moderator Dr. Mark Menestrina, a Livonia resident and medical director at Brighton Hospital.

Calice said St. Mary's emergency room treats 2,000 patients each year whose primary diagnosis is related to substance abuse. That's about one every four hours, he said.

The task force's efforts will continue with a quarterly speaker series starting in March and a run on June 9. The group's Web site is www.saveouryouthtaskforce.com.

After the meeting, Franklin freshman Victoria Hollins signed up for the friends committee, which will organize events for young people.

Hollins, 15, said her mom encouraged her to attend the panel's talk. “She wanted me to be aware of what's out there.”

Brian Montes' story stuck with her. “I thought you would have to use it for a long time to pass away from it,” she said.