

# If I Never Wake Up: Heroin awareness play gets second act

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
November 2 2016 10:38 AM



**GRANITE CITY** - After struggling with the spiral of heroin addiction **Ty Bechel** changed his life, and is now dedicating his creativity to preventing others from making the same devastating decisions.

Bechel founded the addict advocacy group, **Amare**, which helps bring addicts seeking recovery back into society. During his own trials, Bechel found help with his addiction through volunteerism, especially with animals. Because of that, Amare reaches out to addicts and brings them into volunteer opportunities.

He also has written for most of his adolescent and adult life and published a book about his descent into addiction titled "**Heroin Rising**." Bechel is currently working on that book's sequel, and in the meantime, has written a play about the dangers of addiction called, "**If I Never Wake Up**." The play will have its third showing and first debut with a second act on Saturday, Nov. 5 at the **Alfresco Performing Arts Center**, located at 2041 Delmar Ave. in Granite City. The show starts at 7 p.m. and tickets are \$10.

"The play follows Aurora, who starts dabbling with drug use," Bechel said. "She spirals into pills and heroin. In the play, you get to see the strain of family life, and it eventually leads to tragedy. In the second act, the family is left torn by that tragedy and we get to see what happens."

Several of the actors in the play are directly involved with the dangers of addiction. **Joe Brennan**, who plays Aurora's father in the play, once came home to find his 16-year-old daughter dying of a heroin overdose. Her life was saved by **Narcan**, which is sometimes described as a "miracle drug" for saving people from otherwise deadly overdoses. Brennan said his daughter is now 22 and in recovery. Brennan said he is an addict in longtime recovery as well.

"This play is a different way to show awareness," Brennan said. "I've done several town hall meetings, and none of them are as interesting and gripping as this. It's pretty cool to be a part of it."

Amare board member **Shane Patton** plays a counselor in the play, a role he plays in real life as well. Patton runs the **Mad Angels** division of Amare. The Mad Angels work to pull addicts from their hellish lifestyles, especially addicts who have lived through overdoses.

"Mad Angels is part of the Amare program," Patton said. "It is recovery outreach for people who need a way out of addiction."

**Audra Ray**, a family friend of Bechel's, said she struggled with addiction as well. She plays the role of Aurora's mother in the play.

"Ty and I have a shared history of addiction and recovery," she said. "So, we formed a bond. Also, his mother has been my hairdresser forever."

Actual teenagers are playing the roles of the teenagers in the play. Fourteen-year-old **Madison Burnett** plays Aurora. She said she has seen people fall into drug addiction at her school. Burnett attends **Alton High School**, and said she does not see it a lot, but knows of people who have fallen into the destructive habit of opiate dependency.

Fifteen-year-old **Morgan Kaye** plays Aurora's friend in the play. She said she does not see a lot of drug usage at **East Alton Wood River High School**, where she currently attends.

Eighteen-year-old **Jacob Gallup** plays Christian, who he describes as a "crazy misunderstood punk rocker." He said he has seen the face of addiction firsthand.

"I know this girl who fell into heroin lately," he said. "I wanted to go over to her house and hang out and maybe be that friend who can pull her out of it, but I don't know if I can."

If I Never Wake Up has been performed at the Alfresco Performing Arts Center previously and has also been performed at **Lewis and Clark Community College**. This performance will be the first featuring the extended second act. Bechel promises a surprise in the story. The play's approximate running time is two hours, and it has drawn crowds of nearly 200 at earlier performances.