

Finding your local heroin dealer: Alton mother worries about her son's addiction

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ALTON - For the last two and a half years, Billie Trail said her life has been a "living hell."

Two and a half years ago, at an apartment in Alton, Trail said her son asked to borrow her car. She figured he wanted to get groceries, and he had a valid license, so she

allowed him to do it. While staying at the apartment, she wondered how clean her son was keeping his room, so she opened the door. What she found disturbed her and hit her with a wave of shock.

"I found 20-30 needles everywhere with spoons, water and capsules," she said. "It sort of hit me in the face all at one time."

Since that gruesome discovery, Trail said she had been walking the hellish tightrope between turning him in and trying her best to fix the problem as his mother. Her son has not held a job in more than four years, and Trail said she has eliminated all the handouts he received from her - with the exception of a place to stay at night.

"He comes in at night, and we make sure he doesn't have anything on him," she said. "If he coughs or acts funny, we check on him. During the day, though, he's on his own."

Those daylight hours are when her son partakes in his addiction, Trail fears. She said, even though she no longer lends her car to him, he still finds rides to St. Louis to purchase heroin. In a few of those cases, Trail said she has followed her son secretly to several locations across North St. Louis County to see what occurs.

"There are places off of I-70, off of New Halls Ferry, and even some small back roads by some nice houses," Trail said. "Then, you see the same black SUV pull next to the car, and you know what happens after that."

Trail said she has also scoured her son's phone and has found the names of more than 20 different dealers. She said she has worked to alert the various St. Louis police departments regarding those dealers, but as of yet, the only real response she has received was following her son leaving the scene of an accident in St. Louis County while driving her car.

There is also an active warrant for her son's arrest following several probation violations - including a refusal for treatment. He had previously served 90 days in jail after being caught selling a small amount of heroin, which Trail said he did to support his drug habit.

After his limited incarceration and subsequent probation, Trail said her son saw his child after school one day and told her how great it was to be clean and sober again. By the end of that evening, however, Trail said her son had begun using again - thanks to the influence of his on-again, off-again girlfriend.

"I've tried everything, but now I feel like I'm wasting my breath," Trail said. "I've talked with his girlfriend's parents about splitting them up, and have told her to leave and get out of my son's life."

Trail said her son does not have a job and does not support his child, yet finds a way to support a \$40-\$50 a day heroin habit. She said he is losing a lot of weight as well, adding his clothes "hang off him," and are often covered in blood when she sees him.

"It's unbelievable the stuff they go through to do it every day," she said. "I have never in my life seen something so bad. I am almost to the point of calling the police and having him removed. Being his mom, it is very very hard to do that. The thought has crossed my mind, but I'm not sure what to do anymore."

When her granddaughter was born, Trail said her son was only 18, but was determined to be a good father. She said he did several jobs to make money for his daughter, and was a "good dad." After breaking with the child's mother, however, Trail said everything in her son's life "went to hell."

"Before, he was afraid to mix over the counter pills like Advil and Tylenol," she said. "He would call me and ask me if it was safe."

Trail said neither she nor her son's father are or ever were drug addicts, adding she has never touched an illegal drug in her life. She said she even kept her son from marijuana smokers when he was a child. While her biological father was a drug addict, Trail said her son was introduced to heroin by a man who is currently serving time in prison for heroin distribution.

"He told me that's who started him on it," Trail said. "Everything went downhill fast in 2013 when his kid's mother left. After he started on heroin, everything changed. He's punched holes in the wall. We had to replace a lot of stolen stuff, including things that belonged to his grandfather. He's fine when you say yes to him, and give him what he wants, but if you say no, all hell breaks loose."

While Trail said her son has been offered help several times from several sources, including local author and heroin addiction advocate Ty Bechel, she said he has refused all of them. She said she is hoping her son gets arrested by the police so a judge can force him into a treatment program. If not for him, she said, but for his two kids.

"The kids are starting to act out," she said. "His six-year-old son wants to see his father. When they ask me about him, I say, 'your daddy is sick, and he's trying to get better. You can see him again when he is.' They seem O.K. with that answer, but then again they don't live with me. Their mother calls me sometimes when they're acting out."

Trail's main worry is that one day she will receive the call so many other parents have and hear her son was killed through his addiction. Because of that, she is constantly torn about what to do in each situation, knowing the wrong choice could easily end with her son dead at 25, leaving behind two children and a mother who loved him.