

An open letter to the community from an overdose survivor

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WOOD RIVER - A series of Fentanyl overdoses killed one and caused several to need treatment in Wood River the week before the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

While one man - a Purple Heart recipient who left behind a young wife and children - perished from a drug he believed to be cocaine, but was ultimately laced with a lethal dosage of the opioid Fentanyl, others survived. One contacted Riverbender.com as many as 12 hours after doing the tainted drug. The man, who wishes to remain anonymous, received treatment at a local hospital following severe cardiac symptoms. He described himself as a "casual cocaine user" previous to that experience.

After being treated and released from the hospital this man, who is in his early 20s, wrote a letter. He sent that letter to Riverbender.com in the hopes it could be used to help other people who may describe themselves as "casual cocaine users."

The entirety of that letter will not be published, due to its extensive and sometimes explicit content, but here is a large excerpt of it for public consideration. The author said he hoped his words, which stemmed from that terrifying experience of almost dying from a drug he believed he knew, will help someone else in his position.

Cocaine doesn't you in the beginning. It first gives you a taste; an insight of everything you've ever wanted. You're more productive, confident, likable and, most of all, you have a connection to people - people you'd never be able to connect with. You have something to offer. You have control. something to offer far above anything materialistic, or love, or anything money can buy.

If someone wants cocaine, you too can control their deepest desires, just like it controls yours, but you're far too early to realize that yet. Cocaine has many more gifts to give you before it takes your very soul, and your sanity. It comes as a fallen angel, but you know it's crawled its way up from the depths of hell. You know, but you love it too much even let that thought stir in your brain. You don't want to believe that nonsense...

The drug finds you when you are at your peak, and when your sole desire is to be better. It finds you when you're looking for a tool, not an escape. At least that's how it started for me. It allowed me to simply be "more," more than what I was. And when I wasn't worth what I thought I should be, oh believe me, it was still there. It never leaves.

It's in your bars, your grocery stores and, more than likely, residue on the mirror you're looking at when you brush your teeth after some guest came over for dinner. It encapsulates your world, and you welcome it. You live in it, because it's safe. You don't lose your job, your family or your friends. If you do, you get it back.

See, it lets you go from time to time, making sure you can always maintain just enough normalcy to easily believe all is well. Like life can happen, right? Everything can be chalked up to just a bad string of luck.

No one wants to be an addict. They live under bridges. Ha! It goes on, though. Friday nights turn into waking up Tuesday morning with chest pain. probably all the cigarettes, though, probably not heart arrhythmia. Wait, didn't I have to work yesterday? Yeah it's Tuesday. Better brush my teeth and have a good story for the boss, charge my phone and text back all the people wondering where I've been.

Got a voicemail about bar tabs from Saturday. I get paid in four days. I'll take care of it then. The plug needs money by tomorrow, though. I'll just cancel dinner plans and pay him.

The young man's words were slightly edited for both content and profanity. Some parts were not included, either. But, he believes many people across the area are often in the same predicaments in which he found himself.

He has since vowed to not do cocaine again, and thinks his experience with a tainted supply should not have to be the wake up call to many other people in the area who he said casually use the drug.