



‘Walking For Wellness: Stop Heroin’ Walk in Godfrey

by Brittany Kohler, Content Manager
October 22 2014 5:55 PM



Everyone is Encouraged Come Out, Participate in the War Against Heroin!

Heroin use is all too prevalent in our society these days. Heroin is a dangerous and serious issue among our community and it is highly important that we join in the fight against what has become an epidemic.

A wellness walk to stop heroin is scheduled for this Saturday, October 25, in Godfrey, Illinois. The walk will begin at noon in the Dairy Queen parking lot located at 5785 Godfrey Road.

The event is in memory of Aaron Bonds, a former U.S. Marine that overdosed on heroin on June 13, 2014.

“Heroin is a major problem due to the fact that it’s cheaper than most drugs, most addicting and the deadliest,” said Edward Bonds, Aaron’s older brother. “It is the

hardest drug to overcome as the withdrawal symptoms are unbearable and the only thing that makes you 'get well' is more use of heroin."

Heroin deaths are on the rise.

"People know its deadly consequences, yet still continue to use," said Edward. "It's an underground society that people are unaware of and it needs to be brought to light. If we continue this epidemic, death rates will continue to rise and more families will be left devastated."



Aaron battled with depression after being discharged from the Marine Corps. To the casual observer, things looked ok for Aaron. He had a good Union job, he started a family and was blessed with a son. Heroin was not a constant issue in his life. When Aaron got laid off, things got hectic and he started taking prescription pain medication. He soon got wrapped up in the wrong crowd and was introduced to heroin. All these events took place within two short years.

"Aaron as we knew him was gone," said Laura, Aaron's sister-in-law. "He lost weight, looked sick and didn't smile or laugh anymore. I've missed his laugh for a very long time."

Aaron expressed his will to quit and entered rehab over Thanksgiving in 2013. Eventually Aaron relapsed and just 6 months later, he checked himself back into rehab, May 2014.

Laura recalls reading the text, still in her phone from the day, that reads, "ready to make a comeback!" The newly motivated Aaron had a workout plan, he was excited to get his life back to normal and spend time with his family.

But Aaron relapsed for the last time June 13th, just three weeks after he left rehab.

“We were left with so much hurt and pain. Heroin didn’t just destroy Aaron, it destroyed all of us that loved him.” said Laura. “We have to re-focus that energy and make Aaron’s death mean something positive.”

‘Walking for Wellness: Stop Heroin’ is a 501(c)(3) organization that was founded by Gee Vigna, who lost her daughter, Nicky. Nicky passed away from a heroin overdose in 2013. What started out as a weekly walk in her community, is now an ongoing campaign across several states, growing immensely with every walk.



Walking for Wellness: Stop Heroin is dedicated to heroin prevention and education in communities nationwide. The walk raises awareness about heroin and works towards encouraging drug-free communities.

Over 200 people showed up to the first walk held in memory of Aaron back in August. The Bonds family hopes the events will continue to grow, so that heroin awareness will grow.

“Our hope with these walks is that it will spike the conversations that need to happen between parents and children, amongst teens and their friends,” said Laura Bonds. “And that it will also be a support for recovering addicts to see how lucky they are that their family isn’t walking in memory of them.”

Laura Bonds not only lost her brother-in-law, but her son’s father, Greg Maltz, passed away from a heroin overdose in 2012.

“Having to tell Dylan (my son) was the hardest thing that I ever had to do,” said Laura. “Now Dylan lives without his father AND his favorite uncle, all thanks to heroin.”

Everyone effected by the heroin epidemic in this community is encouraged to attend and to stand up and help put an end to this tragic trend.

“The more people that attend, the more attention it will bring and the more word will spread and the more lives we could touch and potentially save,” said Laura. “We have to raise awareness, we have to talk about it and we have to make others talk about it.”

Many attendees will be wearing brightly colored t-shirts that read ‘Stop Heroin’ and slogan signs will be raised up high for everyone to see. T-Shirts are available at www.shop.stopheroin.org, there will be some long sleeve, adult size shirts available at the event. Though the t-shirts are not mandatory, but all proceeds go to local substance abuse prevention organizations and substance abuse prevention education.

Everyone is encouraged to come out and participate. There is no sign up, no reservations, no nothing, just show up with your walking shoes on! Dogs on leashes are welcome to help support the cause as well.

Even if you never met Aaron, this event is a great way to spread awareness, improve finances for local organizations and simply link with people that are effected by the heroin epidemic.

The walk has an event Facebook page that anyone can visit and get more information, meet people in the community and/or ask questions: <https://www.facebook.com/events/304280529780405/>

For more information on Walking for Wellness: Stop Heroin, visit or <http://www.stopheroin.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/stopheroin>

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