



# Parents Of Late Teen Warn About Dangers Of Fentanyl

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter  
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EDWARDSVILLE - After 18-year-old Edwardsville High School senior Anna Schmidt died from “a lethal amount of fentanyl,” [a Facebook group](#) was created in her honor, and [a Facebook post](#) was made to explain her story and warn others about the dangers of fentanyl. The Facebook group and page have since gathered lots of support, and a [GoFundMe](#) and [merchandise page](#) have been set up to support a [scholarship fund](#) in Anna’s memory.

Anna’s mother, Aimee Covington, said the support she’s received from others moved by Anna’s story has resulted in a “whirlwind of emotions” for her.

“It’s been a whirlwind of emotions,” Covington said. “Right now, I have 83 moms from all around that are reaching out to me and crying and calling and telling me how much we inspired them, because they didn’t know how to get their childrens’ story out because they were ashamed.

“It hasn’t even been two months, her graduation is tomorrow, and I have a lot of things going through my head.”

*The following is the previously mentioned [Facebook post](#), co-written by Covington and Anna’s step-mother Heather Schmidt, in its entirety:*

## "The How"

Disclaimer: This is long, and it is probably going to be as awful to read as it is to write. Consider your current situation or circumstance. You may want to save until later or have a friend nearby for support. I'm leading in the first few paragraphs to give people an opportunity to read later.

This is a shared statement from me (Heather Schmidt) and Aimee. It's written from my point of view only because I don't know how to express this from a plural perspective, but the words belong to us both. We worked together on the message before making the information public.

During the first week of this nightmare, I spent one of the sleepless nights channeling every ounce of sanity I could find and wrote a post that was meant to share information. Anna had countless circles of family and friends. We wanted to provide what little information we had for those of us suddenly joined together by the same shock and grief at hearing the news. Doing so also exposed the raw emotion running through the fabric of our souls. I looked back later at the comments and realized the impact the initial post had for others, and made a silent vow to provide transparency (where possible) as we navigated whatever comes next. Nothing has ever been harder.

A couple of weeks ago I mentioned there were milestones we wanted to share with the group. Those are still on the radar, but first we have new information. Again, this is information that we recognize we don't have any obligation to share. We are choosing to because there are a lot of rumors circulating and the truth might save others from the same nightmare.

So here's the hardest truth we've had to share since the start...

### **Anna was murdered.**

Her death is now a criminal investigation being managed by the Madison County Sheriff's Office. The toxicology results showed that Anna died from a lethal amount of Fentanyl.

That's it. Just fentanyl. There were no other drugs in her system. No marijuana. No cocaine. No oxy. No meth. No ecstasy (mdma). No heroin. And we've heard the rumors...not even Percocet. Nothing except fentanyl.

Since Anna's death we've learned things about the hidden world of teenagers...even our teenagers. As hard as it is to accept, Anna probably was using Percocet. Why? We don't know. Pain from cheer? Trouble sleeping? To be "cool?" We may never have that answer. What we do know?

### ***Anna didn't choose to take fentanyl and she didn't choose to die!***

Someone else made that choice for her. We are forced to acknowledge that she was a teenager who likely made a poor choice, maybe even several times, but someone else made the choice that ended her life. Someone most likely gave her a straight Fentanyl

pill that was probably disguised as Percocet. Everything indicates that it was given to her by someone she knew and trusted.

Blindsided would be putting this bombshell lightly. This is a girl that had a 4.0 GPA last semester. She had been accepted at several universities and was committed to SLU in the fall. She was rounding out 13 years of competitive cheerleading with Coaches Choice and Lionheart awards honoring her at the year-end banquet. She mentored kids in the juvenile diversion program. She was happy, fun, witty, and fiercely full of love.

Even though we had NO REASON to suspect Anna, or any of our girls, were using drugs we nonetheless put checks and balances in place. A condition of having their cars was that Life360 was installed and always active on their phones. We had drug tests on standby at the house. They knew they were subject to them at any time. One summer we SUSPECTED one of the kids was drinking and driving (not Anna). Without full evidence, we installed a breathalyzer ignition in her car. When Anna was a freshman, she was caught vaping (nicotine) in the bathroom at school. We made her pay the ticket, go in front of the judge, and take the juvenile diversion course she later went back to mentor.

IT WASN'T ENOUGH

***Found at  
mailbox***



***SUMMER 2022***

We moved into our new house late 2021. We finally had the space for the girls to have friends over. Last summer there were kids from various backgrounds in and out all the time. There was no judgement, assumptions, or concerns until one of our neighbors found a small baggie in our yard that looked like it may have previously contained some kind of drug.

The second that was brought to our attention the revolving door was closed. We called a meeting with the girls. We took their phones & laptops. Then we separated them, gave them drug tests, and interviewed one while checking another's room top to bottom. **DRUG TESTS WERE NEGATIVE. ROOMS WERE CLEAN.**

We gave the girls' a dose of the risky possibilities – *How did they know what was in it? What if Adley had found that bag? What if someone overdosed? What if the cops were called? In what world did they think it was okay for someone to have drugs at the house? Why the hell didn't they tell these "friends" to get off their property?*

Shortly after we also installed 10 surveillance cameras in and around our house. We found out who probably had the drugs and banned them from the house. For months we took keys and made anyone coming to the house meet with us and sign in and out on a log. We never stopped talking about the risks.

**IT STILL WASN'T ENOUGH.**

**THE FALLOUT**

What is enough? What can we do to keep our kids safe?

Honestly, I don't know. We have some thoughts listed below, but they aren't enough. This next part should have a \*TRIGGER WARNING. We debated the merit of sharing this memory, an endless loop burned into every moment since. If the effort to write it out, to provide insight into what happens after choices take a life, reaches just one person and avoids another tragedy then it too needs to be shared.

This memory is shared for anyone reading this that...

...is considering taking something, for any reason, that you didn't get directly from your doctor or a regulated supplier.

...is selling or has sold anything, for any reason, that is a controlled substance. A drug that makes you money at the expense of killing others.

...has friends or kids that you know are using drugs.

You already know what happened to Anna. You already know the beautiful life that was stolen from her. You already know the pain you feel from losing her. You know the light that left this world. You miss Anna. We do too.

Yet your life, for now, gets to go on. It's a little sadder, but for the most part unchanged. It should, except for the doing or selling drugs part. I want to give you a little insight into what it's done to our world because maybe if the other WARNING! DANGER! signs don't sing to you then hearing about the fallout will help you make a different choice.

In the post mentioned earlier I talked about the night before Anna died:

“Anna went to practice Tuesday night. She came home and was texting me about SLU planning. She made pasta. She talked to her sisters. She was doing tictoks at midnight. She was happy and healthy when she went to bed...and she didn't wake up the next morning. She'd been gone several hours by the time we found her around 6:45.”

What happened next is the first thing we think of every morning. It consumes our thoughts during the day. It is on repeat as we try to fall asleep. It fills our nightmares.

I woke up early that morning nauseous with anxiety. I didn't really have a reason for it at the time, and it wasn't super uncommon, so I figured it was work-related and shuffled down to my office to start the day. Looking back the subconscious is more alert that we understand.

A little while later Niyah came down and asked me to use my car for the day. Anna wasn't waking up to her alarm, also not uncommon. She had been a heavy sleeper since she was little. We went up to her room and knocked on the door. The door was locked. Also, not uncommon. Adley likes to sneak into her sisters rooms and play with jewelry and makeup. She also has no boundaries when it comes to barging in and waking someone up.

“Anna wake up.” Nothing.

“ANNA WAKE UP.” Still nothing.

Starting to get a little worried we started searching for the tool that opens the interior doors. I call Eric who is out in the fields.

“Hey do you know where that gadget is that opens the doors. Anna's alarm has been going off for a while. She won't wake up and I'm a little worried.” He says he's on his way home.

Abi wakes up to all the commotion and comes out of her room across from Anna's. Adley starts up the stairs in 4 year old curiosity. A little worried is turning to fear. I'm yelling at them both, although I can't remember what, and Niyah is helping me get the door open.

We finally find the gadget and Niyah gets the door open. I see Anna sitting on her bed, slumped over with her head to her knees. I walked into the room and pull her back. The front of her body is purple. Her face is pale and twisted. Her back is ice cold. She's stiff. Again my subconscious knew what my brain refused to process.

I screamed. It was a noise I hadn't heard anywhere other than horror movies. I didn't know until that moment that it was real. Abi took Adley and brought her outside. A quick move that saved maybe an ounce of future trauma. I ran from the room.

"Call 911!" "Call 911!"

Niyah calls and I just remember hearing "we'll transfer you to.." and yelling "NO...we need someone NOW." A moment washed over me that said "CPR" and I ran back into the room for a second, and touched her back again. This time my brain processed she was cold and stiff. I made the horror noise again, ran back out, and started downstairs in complete panic.

I heard Eric coming in the door and ran to the kitchen.

"No no no no – don't go up there – no no no!"

"Is she dead? Is she gone?????"

Eric ran upstairs. I curled into a fetal position on our kitchen floor.

"No no no. It can't be real. This isn't real. Tell me this isn't real." – over and over and over and over.

The next thing I remember is Eric coming down and engulfing me on the floor as I lost my absolute everything. There are a lot of stories between those moments. Someone else's to share if they decide.

...Alissa getting the call to come home.

...Abi telling the teams that Anna had died.

...Niyah helping Eric move Anna for CPR while on the phone with 911.

My final memory from that morning is Eric calling Aimee, and hearing the same unreal and indescribable noise through the phone from across the room as the information shattered the last shard of normalcy.

There are a million moments since then that will forever change each of us, but none as much as that morning that started a chain reaction that cannot be undone.

- None of the kids have slept upstairs since that night. We either sleep too little – reliving the day is worse when we shut our eyes – or we sleep too much to forget the nightmare as long as possible. Last week I was up for over 48 hours straight and then slept for 36 hours straight.
- We have unreasonable fears. We hate when any of the kids aren't home. The same fears that we might have had as parents before but dismissed as unreasonable are now very possible. Everything bad is now actually possible.
- We can't function. All the girls quit their jobs. They stumbled through the finish line of the semester. I've taken a leave of absence. Aimee has been away from her house and business as much as she's been here seeking answers and support.
- Going to town is tough and avoided. We worry about the side glances and stigma of being "that family" whose daughter died.
- Milestones and holidays that should be celebrated and cherished have been clouded with grief that pushes out the joy that should be felt. Probably forever.
- We are collectively side-by-side but a million miles apart. Everyone tiptoes around how someone else might be feeling that day. We all have our moments, and any little memory can trigger one.
- Trust is a fantasy that lives in the past. Trust in ourselves as people, but mostly as parents. Trust in our kids whose requests to hang with friends are probably perfectly innocent, but we missed so much with Anna so how do we know? Trust in our judgement about people and situations. Trust in our police. Trust in our schools. Sometimes trust in God. How did none of see this?!? Why didn't we know?!? This is a rabbit hole that even Alice wouldn't be able to escape. Waking up certainly doesn't work. Talking to someone about it for a million years won't change this feeling. As a parent your bare minimum for a successful day is to get your kid to the other side of it alive. We failed, and we don't know how.

## **NOT-SO-FUN FACTS**

## **IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU**

Let me repeat...this is not something that happens to "other people." We thought the same thing. There is a campaign "One Pill Can Kill." It makes me sick to my stomach, but our story is a dime a dozen with one search online. Anna's death is part of a growing statistic. This cruelty does not discriminate on gender, race, or socioeconomic status.



“Not my kid” is exactly what we said – multiple times – until it was. The would, should, and could haunt us every.single.day.

(<https://www.dea.gov/onepill>)

## **SAY SOMETHING**

I’m hesitant to write this one because there will be some of you that think fingers are being pointed. **THEY ARE NOT. YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME.** Not in anyway, shape, or form. This was not your choice for Anna. This is a lessons learned for **ALL OF US** (including the parents)...If you know a friend is on this path, or even considering this path, please do not give them the benefit of the doubt. Do not tell them next time you’ll speak up. Do not go easy on them. Make sure someone knows that can stop it.

## **OUR BIGGEST RISK IS SILENT**

Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for American’s 18 – 45. In 2020 more people died from fentanyl than Covid, car accidents, cancer, and suicide **COMBINED**.

Did you know that? I didn’t until we learned the truth.

(<https://www.wicker.senate.gov/.../time-to-tackle-the...>).

## **YOU DON’T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE**

On May 8th the St. Louis/Southern Illinois DEA recovered 1.3 MILLION fentanyl pills. Even the DEA’s biggest challenge is fake pills designed to look identical to actual pills.

(<https://www.kmov.com/2023/05/08/st-louis-dea-announces-72-arrests-13-million-fentanyl-pills-seized-year-long-operation-targeting-drug-cartel-networks/>)

## **YOU CAN'T TRUST A DEALER**

**\*IF IT DID NOT COME FROM A PHARMACY OR LEGALLY REGULATED SUPPLIER DIRECTLY TO YOUR HANDS...DON'T TAKE IT\***

We have a pretty good idea who gave the pill(s) to Anna. We aren’t certain they knew they were giving her straight Fentanyl. Don’t think they are smart enough to know the difference – They aren’t. Don’t think they care if you live or die – They don’t.

## **DELETE SNAPCHAT**

Snapchat truly is the spawn of satan. It's like the gateway drug of social media with cute little filters that remove all flaws while concealing drug deals in 30 second snaps. This is also a false sense of security. The snaps are saved on a data warehouse backed up by backups for backups. It will take a little longer to find, but the truth is going to come out. Just send a text. You can even include a selfie.

## **IT ONLY TAKES A LITTLE**

[Around 90% of pills sold by your dealer are probably fake. 60% of those pills contain a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl.](#) It takes the equivalent of 12 grains of salt to be lethal. Let's break down that math...your dealer has 100 pills...54 of them could kill you.

For the "it won't happen to me" teenage crowd in the back let's look at from another perspective. You have 100 condoms...54 of the condoms have holes in them...there's a pretty good chance your partner has an STD...the fun from sex lasts moments...the STD and/or baby lasts a lifetime. Are you going to take the risk?

## **BE PREPARED**

Fentanyl is an epidemic worse than Covid. Hopefully anyone that reads this learns from Anna's murder and never even considers using drugs, but you may find yourself with someone that hasn't learned that lesson the hard way. Fentanyl takes minutes to end a life. Narcan wouldn't have helped Anna because it was too late by the time we found her. We've been worried about date rape drugs and have had test strips for those since the concept of college entered the teenage brain. Use the same friend code you should have for drinking. Get Fentanyl test strips. If you didn't see where it came from – test it. Always have a friend watching your back. Keep Narcan around in case something gets missed. Narcan can be purchased from CVS. The pharmacist writes a prescription on site. No doctor appointment needed. They are \$35.02 each. Keep both supplied like ibuprofen. It could be the difference between life and death.

## **WE NEED ANSWERS**

We suspect that someone took evidence from her room at the celebration. If that was you, or you know who did, please know that you are not protecting Anna or anyone else. In fact, you are putting someone else's life in jeopardy. We need to definitively identify what Anna took.

We have a pretty good idea of who gave her the pills. If you know anything you are not protecting them, and you are putting yourself in a risky legal position by concealing evidence. When the records come back from cloud-based social media servers that person is going to be proven without reasonable doubt. If it is who we think there is

another murder since Anna's that will point back to this person as well. How many more murders do they get to commit before the records come back? At what profit? It's not greater than the expense of a life.

The person who gave Anna the fentanyl is reading this post. You now have 2 choices. If the person is who we think I want you to know that I don't think you meant to give her fentanyl. I think you are in survival mode. I think you are in over your head. I think you are scared. You know we have grace. You know that we will advocate for grace in exchange for honesty. Don't drag this out. Don't kill anyone else. Give yourself a chance for a future. Turn yourself in. I'll hold your hand as you do it if you want me to. You made one choice, and that choice killed our daughter. You have an opportunity to make another choice. A better one. Your alternative is that when the records come back you will be arrested anyway, but instead of grace we will do everything legally in our power to make sure that you never know another day that isn't spent behind bars and that each of those days is felt with as much misery as you have inflicted on our family. The fear of making the right choice should be less scary than the fear of making the wrong one.

### **MAKE IT COUNT - Love Like [Anna](#)**

There can't possibly be a time where I write, say, or even think about any of these details without losing my breath and ripping off the useless bandages of my soul that are trying in vain to hold the pieces of my sanity together. But if any part of this post saves just one kid then I'll take the bleeding...this time and 1000 after it if necessary...until there isn't a single grain of fentanyl left to murder anyone else and destroy the lives left behind.

*For more information and updates on Anna's story and scholarship fund, see the ["Lovelikeyanna" Facebook group](#).*