

Wood River mother, Coroner Nonn lead walking fight against heroin

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Loral Lamere of Wood River is trying everything she can to prevent the spread of heroin use.

Loral lost her son, Kyle, on April 20, 2014, to an opiate overdose. Kyle was only age 29.

She recently organized a walk that started at CVS Pharmacy in Wood River that was quite successful in bringing attention to heroin and other drug use. During the march, people of every age were carrying powerful signs about stopping heroin and illegal drug use.

Lamere is also founder and president of Metro Addiction Awareness of Illinois.

“Kyle struggled with drugs in 10th and 11th grade,” she said. “Kyle was kind of lost and searching for something and I am not sure he ever found that. He resorted to drugs for his answer. Kyle never quite felt like he was good enough. He struggled with depression and the drugs were a cover-up.”

Loral said many addicts don’t have the right insurance to cover a psychiatrist unless they have a good job.

“The government doesn’t cover that kind of service, especially for those late in high school, college age and mid-20s,” she said. “It is the way they self-medicate. We are losing the majority of these kids from the ages of 20 to 30.”

One of the leading crusaders in Madison County against drug abuse has been Coroner Steve Nonn. Loral approached Nonn before the recent walk and asked him to take part and he immediately said he would.

“We met him at a town hall meeting at Wood River High School and I spoke to him afterward about my group,” Loral said. “He handed me his card and said, ‘my personal cell is on my card and please don’t hesitate to call me.’ I called him and within five minutes he returned my call and when I invited him to walk with us he said he would be there.”

Watching Nonn and the rest of the walkers strolling for wellness in Madison County recently was one of the most amazing things Loral says she has ever witnessed.

“Not only did we have local police support blocking traffic, but we were escorted all the way,” she said. “Having the Madison County Coroner walking with us was a huge step in getting the message out that government is supporting us in that. He is one of the most important people to get our message out. He sees it every day with our overdose numbers in Madison County already at 24 (so far this year). We are only a few away from our total number last year already in July.”

Nonn has deep convictions about battling the problems with drug abuse in the area.

“This is an issue we have to attack and raise awareness for,” he said. “We are being successful in the education part of drug addiction. Those who use heroin can be addicted after their first time use. The receptors in the brain are changed. There is no other drug like heroin. Some of it these days is 85 percent pure; those using it don’t know what it is mixed with and what is in it.”

Wes Lamere lost his brother to the drug overdose and now he is joining his mother, Loral, in standing up against drug abuse.

He said there needs to be awareness raised not only here at home, but throughout the country about the perils of heroin and other drugs.

“I will never forget going to the hospital after losing my brother and the whole family being in shock,” Wes Lamere said. “I absolutely want to support my mom in what she is doing.”

Loral said for her and several others who have lost children to drugs, the walk was an emotional day but also offered “healing.”

She said her family still struggles with the death of her son.

“We didn’t know how to deal with it,” she said. “We had never lost anything like that. We lost my son in April and in September, I had a friend that reached out to me to attend a candlelight vigil in Bethalto of families who had lost loved ones to drug overdoses. I grabbed my family together and attended. One of the young men from the Madison County Coroner’s office and several addicts spoke and that touched me.”

Through the Internet, Loral taught herself about how abusing drugs and addiction affects a person’s brain. After she formed her group, she contacted Tim Ryan of Naperville, Ill., and Chad Sabora, of St. Louis, to come and speak at the recent event and she said were both amazing.

By working with Sabora and the Madison County Coroner’s office, Loral has learned she didn’t fail her son and his struggle with addiction.

“Heroin is so mind-altering, that no matter what a family tries to do, until an addict seeks help, they can only love them and support them the best way we can,” she said. “When we got the phone call about Kyle overdosing, that was probably the hardest phone call to take.”

“We did everything we could, but we couldn’t save our child. Those words you have lost your child are the worst words you ever want to hear. Through the loss of our child we hope to help other families to not have to feel the loss of their child.”



