

This I Believe - Kim Manlove

*Making A Difference*

I believe that in death my 16-year-old son is making a difference with his life. In 2000 my wife and I discovered that our younger son, David, had a serious substance abuse problem. David was a loving, charming, and thoroughly convincing young man, and we believed him when he promised he would stop. For a time, we thought we could handle the problem with home drug testing and close supervision, but we were wrong. We finally enrolled him in a substance abuse treatment program. After months of counseling support we finally felt we could let David have a little more freedom---so on a sunny warm June morning, David got up, mowed the lawn without being told, and asked if he could go swimming with friends. We agreed, and made plans to meet later that afternoon to go to a movie.

Later that day we got the call that is every parent's nightmare. It was the mother of one of David's friends. She told that David had been swimming in the pool, had inhaled the propellant from a can of computer duster to get high, dove under water, and didn't come up. David had died from a deadly side effect of huffing: sniffing death syndrome.

We had just become members of a club that no parent ever wants to join. Since that day, we've come to believe many new truths. We believe in the power of the disease of addiction and that a consequence of continued substance abuse can be death. We believe that by sharing the story of David's struggle we can educate others about the perils of substance abuse. And we believe that although his story is one of tragedy, it is also one of triumph, loss and recovery --- and of grief and hope for us.

Two weeks before David died, we suspected he was using inhalants, but he denied it vehemently. He said he knew how dangerous it was and vowed that he would never do anything so stupid. Exasperated, we asked David why he was doing this; what did he want to do with his life? And with all the earnestness of his 16 years shining in his eyes, he told us, I WANT to do something with my life! I WANT to make a difference!

We share David's story with others who are troubled by addiction and---sometimes—his story helps other young people change their lives or gives other parents a way to talk with their children about their problems. The sharing helps us hold onto him and given him a way to do what he wanted to do – make a difference.