

Dear House Community and Family Advancement Committee,

My daughter died of a heroin overdose October 2014. She needed intense dual diagnosis therapy for her addiction and resources were difficult, to say the least, to find. As I witnessed her struggle and ultimate defeat to heroin, an overwhelming sense of helplessness came over me. Two years passed and I could not help but notice the increasing number of deaths by heroin...I decided to get involved. It was at that time an organization, Lake County Fight Against Heroin, was rising. It was at grass roots but, they were reaching out to addicts and their families providing hope and resources for treatment as well as removing the mask, stigma, that is attached to addiction. Two months later, we had an idea to bring Hope Over Heroin to our Lake County Community. The support was unbelievable for an event that took place in late August 2017.

Hope Over Heroin is a Christ centered outreach. The testimonies of the lives that God has turned around is a miracle. That weekend rally put 35 men and women, addicted to heroin, in treatment. My church was involved and as they blessed others by reaching out, they were blessed by the response. Numerous individuals shared with our church members their family struggles with addiction and their grief to the loss of loved ones. There were over 35 agencies, secular and faith based represented at this rally. The awareness to the needs of people suffering, treatment available, and the lives lost to addiction were brought to the forefront at this event and the response in the days following brought me to tears. If only Hope Over Heroin and Lake County Fight Against Heroin we're there when I was searching for treatment centers. Two organizations, one Christ centered and one reaching out to our community came together to make a difference.

This, Sir, is what we need...cooperation of all entities to reach out, educate and eliminate the stigma so that families can find the help they need. We need treatment centers and faith based initiatives that have an 80% success rate in treating addicts. It is a realization that there is a God larger than their addiction that gives hope for healing.

I pray that consideration will be taken in passing Substitute House Bill 427 helping faith based organizations reach out to the masses of those suffering from addiction.

Sincerely,  
Donna Gillen  
7823 King Memorial Rd  
Mentor, OH 44060  
216-598-8534