

SHE'S GONE AND SHE'S NEVER COMING BACK

Testimony by Corinne LaMarca

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"She's gone and she is never coming back" that was the harsh statement I heard one morning after making my way to my mailbox, three weeks after my daughter was killed by a marijuana impaired driver. I was confronted by a neighbor who had recently lost his wife of fifty years. He thought I needed to hear the truth so I wouldn't delude myself. It was shocking, but perhaps it was something I needed to hear. Before that, I was slowly trying to process her loss and live without her in my life. No more phone calls, no more plans, no more Jennifer to love and worry about. Even now, 10 years later, tears stream down my face as I write this.

I knew I could not let this tragedy be in vain and happen to yet another innocent person. I learned that finding "new purpose" is the last step in grief recovery process. I also have learned that in helping others, we help ourselves. So slowly, I learned all about today's marijuana and how I was going to make a difference through advocating and educating about the horrible outcomes stemming from the marijuana expansion in our country.

Jennifer's story is an amazing one. She earned a lacrosse scholarship to college. She worked hard there and achieved dean's list status every semester as well becoming a life guard, tutor, mentor and coach to a high school lacrosse team. Her major was Intelligence and Analysis Research. She learned 3 languages fluently including Arabic.

In her HITDA internship she excelled. She then made a decision that she wanted to pursue a career in fighting illicit drugs. She accepted another position in the meantime, as the funding for HITDA had not come through yet. One evening, just a couple of months after graduation, she was called into work and as she made her way, a man driving impaired on medical cannabis came speeding through a red light (82mph) directly into the side of my daughter's car as she passed under a green. Her car was hurled through the intersection crashing through the front of building where she died instantly. He was uninjured. People at the scene said his eyes were glazed over and did not even realize what happened. He was from Michigan and using medical cannabis as he drove through our state in which he admitted.

So, the sad truth is, once marijuana is even more accessible and more people think it's okay to use because it is legalized, (this does infer it is safe) these types of tragedies will become more frequent. There is no warning, nothing one can do to avoid it and it ends a life in the blink of an eye. Jennifer never saw him coming.

Yes, it's true, MY daughter's gone and she's not coming back, but that doesn't mean there are not countless others' lives that can be saved by stopping this train barreling our way to expand the legalization of marijuana. We need to hold our politicians accountable and pass laws that protect our children, not sacrifice them on the cannabis altar.

