

Thank you for
this opportunity

Hello my name is Dianne Deras Kirkwood and I have lived here in Santa Barbara my whole life. I have never been to one of these meetings, nor do I have any public speaking skills so I apologize in advance for my nerves.

A few weeks ago, I saw the blurb in the paper regarding this meeting and something in me told me I need to come here. I tried, believe me I tried to ignore the pull but it's seems like every time I "forgot" about it, I would see the announcement again. I realized, I had to do this.

About 7 years ago, I had a coworker who was caring for her terminally ill father in her home. When his needs became too much for her, she had him transferred to a hospice house. A few months later, she took a trip out of the State leaving her 18 year old son behind.

Since this was his first time alone, he invited friends over to hang out. One night he and 3 other friends noticed in the refrigerator the "comfort kit" along with many other prescriptions that belonged to his grandfather. Because his grandfather could not swallow, many of the medications were in liquid form. The 4 of them decided to experiment with these drugs, the next morning 1 child did not wake up and that was my son, Daniel. He was 19 years old

The autopsy revealed that the levels of medications in my son's body were all under therapeutic levels, it was the combination that stopped his heart and killed him. I have always accepted that my son's decision to experiment with these drugs was quite frankly, stupid. He was young and thought he was invincible. However, to have life ending drugs at anyone's fingertips is a danger.

The days following Daniel's death if I could count how many people would say to me "if you can't sleep I can give you 1 of my pills to help you" you would be amazed! These are people who love me and wanted to help me probably didn't realize the help they wanted to offer was what killed my son. Prescription drugs in the wrong hands!!

There is not a convenient way to dispose of unused prescriptions. We need to have more pharmacies, doctors or health care providers step up and remove medications that are no longer in use. More disposable receptacles in more places, perhaps 1 next to the pharmacy counter. A pickup service for people who cannot get to the assigned receptacles or a check and balance system when someone passes to make sure all medications are removed, we need to have more control over unused medications. Flushing them down the toilet is not the answer, storing them in a medicine chest is not the answer. Taking responsibility for disposing them is the only way we can make a difference. We need to be proactive and find a way, a person or a service dedicated to removing unused prescriptions before another child like Daniel wakes up in heaven.