

Hello, my name is Patricia Groh. My daughter Elizabeth along with her family has been dealing with the terrible illness of drug addiction and mental health for 18 years. With the physical, mental and sexual abuse she has endured, it is a miracle she is alive. At age 14 she was hospitalized for severe depression, she shared she was sexually abused at age 10 by her male teacher. By age 15 she was smoking pot, which leads to many other drugs. Crack cocaine is her drug of choice, but she has used Heroin and other opiates. Early on when it was “just” Marijuana, the counselors and hospital said she was self medicating, did not feel it was a problem. It was not until she ended up in a hospital in Ohio, Belmont Pines, at age 16 (she had attempted suicide and the Erie hospital would not take her). I was asked if anyone was dealing with the fact she was smoking pot every day. This was the beginning of the horrors a family is forced to deal with because their loved one is using drugs. Many times she has been turned away from hospitals. Detox would not take her because Crack would not kill her. We were even told to give her some pills, so they would admit her, this is crazy. A friend’s adult daughter who was on Heroin was turned away from detox, she was not in danger of dying, the mother was told to get her alcohol and they would have to admit her, crazy. Earlier this year when my daughter was released from Erie County Prison, on a probation violation, she used within 24 hours. She asked me to take her to drug and alcohol counseling. I went with her, she agreed to do outpatients; it would be 2 to 3 weeks before they could get her anywhere and longer for inpatient. Needless to say she never made it and today is still using. I belonged to Al-Anon for years and helped to bring Nar-Anon to Erie (about 8 years ago). We know alcohol is a drug, but street drugs are illegal, so it becomes not only a quicker killer but life threatening just to obtain it and could be very expensive. A drug addict’s life if they do not find recovery is Jails, Institutions, and Death. It has become a nationwide problem. I know the addict needs to want recovery. If we do not help them in that moment, it is usually too late. If we do not have the room, we need a safe house until we could get them to that rehab. Earlier this year at a college fraternity party in Texas a student overdosed and 9 were arrested on drug charges. Some believe incarcerating addicts for months and years is clean time, it is not, it does keep them alive for a little longer. The need for women drug free housing is so needed. In Erie the only place I know of is Community House, only for women who have children. We need some step down housing to teach those with the disease of addiction. Addiction is not just the drug; it is the behaviors they have learned to support their habit. An old friend of mine, who was in recovery, always said “we are not bad people trying to get good; we are sick people trying to get well”. I have lost count of the funerals I have been to in the last few years. Since March, my daughter has lost 5 friends to this terrible disease. Some say let them die, they are only drug addicts. Do we ignore someone who comes to the Emergency Room having heart trouble, because they are overweight and smoke (NEVER). Why do we turn away addicts who need help? Please do not let all these death have no meaning. We need to help those still alive and help them to see life is worth living. My daughter thru the years has had months of sobriety, she is smart, loving and a very caring person who suffers from the terrible disease of addiction. She has had a lot of support and can’t seem to get it, what about the ones who have no one

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and are raising children. It has gotten so much worse in the last 5 years, DEATH from drugs is finally is getting our attention. What are we going to do about it?