

June 16, 2012

Re: Teen AA

“When did our children become expendable? Our children are *not* expendable” When Susan Rothery of Teen AA made that statement, an alarm went off in my head and I asked myself: *When had our children become expendable? How did that happen?* And quickly coming to the resolve that *our children are not expendable!*

Even the teens that have fallen victim to drugs and alcohol are redeemable and have value. But they need some help - and that's where Teen AA plays a critical role in the individual lives of these kids, and the greater community.

Kids need all the support they can get – and Teen AA supplies that need for teens in recovery. The program works because the kids created it themselves, it “belongs” to them and they quickly understand the value the program has for them. For some, it can mean the difference between life or death.

I lost my own son on September 22, 2003 to an accidental prescription drug overdose. Kent was 18.5 years old and on top of the world. Already in his second year of college, Kent was working in his field of choice and an entrepreneur. In his short life Kent had begun to make a contribution through mission trips with his youth group, and impacting the youth in his sphere of influence. Sadly, the pull of drugs and alcohol was too much for him to handle alone and I was not aware of the peril he was in. Had Kent had a support program to help him cope, and had I been better educated and aware of the issues and risks he was facing, maybe Kent would still be here and making a mark on the community, and adding something good to the world. That haunts me daily.

Several years after my son died, I became aware of DrugFreeAz.org, a not-for-profit organization that seeks to eliminate drug and alcohol abuse and use in teens. They do this through education aimed at the parents, the medical community and teachers, administrators, etc. Research shows us that kids that learn a lot about the risks and dangers of drugs and alcohol from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use. I volunteered with DrugFreeAz.org for several years and then I left my public relations job in corporate America and joined the world of not-for-profits and DrugFreeAz.org. I've never been happier or more frustrated! I believe that as a community, we can (and must) help to educate our kids on the risks and dangers of using drugs and alcohol.

We need programs like Teen AA in the community! We need to reach these kids that feel like they have nowhere to go, and no one to help them. What started out as a “bad decision” for these kids to experiment with drugs and alcohol quickly becomes a monster they cannot control. Teen AA can help them cope, deal with their daily struggles and provide accountability, in a way that “adult” driven or adult lead groups just can't.

Teen AA has extended benefits in the community as well. The kids that are part of Teen AA are empowered to deal with their struggles and they can bring that empowerment into the home and have a positive effect on siblings and parents alike. This is critical to help stop cycles of abuse in families.

The more communities and schools that adopt and include Teen AA as an offering to help kids, the better off we will all be. Teen AA is important to these kids as a component of their treatment for addiction. And is a critical piece of the puzzle to help these kids stay sober. Teen AA, along with parent education and treatment options all working together, give our kids the greatest chance for success and a life filled with meaning and contributions to society.

Teen AA can help us redeem these kids for the good of all of us. They are part of our community and we mustn't let them down.

Please contact me if you require any further information.

Kind regards,

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