

Marin Elizabeth Riggs

Marin was kind and caring, and looked for the best in everyone. She fought for the underdog and took pleasure at seeing her friends succeed. She loved her family and her two dogs Sophie and Sam. She was active in her community and her school and was a typical American teenager who sometimes pushed the boundaries but always was accountable for her actions and appeared to learn from her mistakes. She had a smile that would light up the room, and exhibited an undeniable passion for life!

Marin was an excellent basketball player and golfer and was not afraid to learn new things and grow as an individual. She even entered the Ms. Violet Pageant in Pickerington, OH and won most photogenic, of course she did! As for her relationship with her dad and me, there was never a conversation that was off limits, she could tell us anything! We were involved in the community, her Dad coached her basketball team and we never missed her sporting events. We were your everyday middle class family.

She experienced what most teenagers do; broken friendships, boys that broke her heart, struggling with her weight and acceptance from her friends.

It was her senior year!! We got her through high school and she was now looking forward to a bright future. She graduated early in January of 2010, had a job and planned to enroll in College in the spring. Her goal was to be an Ultrasound Technician. She had lost weight; she seemed happy and had a bright future ahead, which unfortunately included a boy we did not like but thought it wouldn't last and that all the drama of high school was behind her! And then on October 31, 2010 she was coming home from a friend's house past her curfew and she hit a neighbor's mailbox. She told us what she had done and the very next morning her father took her to the neighbor's house. She apologized and replaced their mailbox. Because we have always taught her to be accountable and honest she also had to go to the Pickerington Police Dept. because someone had filed a complaint and she confessed to hitting the mailbox but charges were still filed Failure to Control and leaving the scene of the accident. She went to court on November 18, 2010 and pleaded not guilty; she had never been in any real trouble before now just a speeding ticket, but this was different. She had to submit to a drug test. The judge asked her if she would pass and of course she was honest and said no. The shocking truth was that she tested positive for opiates. We thought opiates? Our nightmare began. The boy we did not like had introduced her to heroin and she had been using for 6 months. We thought heroin was a street drug a junkie's drug how did our daughter get involved with something like this in a community like ours? Part of her probation was attending treatment which she did for 60 days, she returned home and seemed to be trying to put her life back together but 30 days later she relapsed and her father found her on the bathroom floor unconscious, blue and not breathing. This happened twice and they brought her back to life, but she was now using heroin intravenously.

She came home from treatment in June of 2011 and was doing great, she was emotional and felt she had ruined her life and now had to find new friends; those living a sober life attending AA meetings. She found a sponsor and was doing well but, according to her journals, in the back of her mind she thought, I am only 19 years old ...what have I done? We kept telling her she had her whole life ahead of her and that she could overcome this! We attended the parents meetings in treatment and were concerned to learn that less than 50% of heroin users recover. We were scared but we knew with our strong family and faith Marin could become one of the success stories and years later we would look back on this as a horrible time in her life and in our family's lives. We sold our house in Pickerington, OH

in October of 2011 and moved to Upper Arlington OH, we thought a new start was good for all of us. Marin began a new job and seemed to be doing great. We were renting an apartment while our house was being finished and although we worried everyday about Marin and the possibility that she would relapse, we had hope. Like the program teaches, one day at a time and by now she had 6 months of sobriety. Marin turned 20 on January 15, 2012 and two weeks later, two days before we were moving into our new house, our son found her on the bathroom floor but his time we could not save her she died on January 28, 2012.

Our story is to let parents know that this can happen to any family. It's not something that only happens to kids whose parents are uninvolved in their lives. It doesn't only happen in low income families and it isn't something that one can assume will be resolved quickly. Heroin is readily available in every suburb in every city in every state and can be had for as little as \$10. It's an insidious and enticing drug that affects the otherwise intelligent children who sit at your family table. Your sons and daughters are susceptible to the lure of new and exciting friends who travel in different circles and seek companionship and power over those looking to fit in.

Mine is a cautionary tale too often told by moms and dads. What we all learned is this; talk about it. Educate your children to the facts; one time use is not possible, addiction is almost immediate and relatively few users recover. It's never too soon to confront your children with the harsh reality of heroin use, overdose and death. Parents should understand heroin abuse is a disease and not something they should be ashamed of. Let your children know you're in their corner and give them hope. Sometimes that's all they need to take the first step to recovery.