

Saving Her Son: 'Alone I Achieved Nothing'

Alcohol, heroin, prescription opiates...they are all part of the wave of addiction, pain, demolished dreams and death that is sweeping over Long Island. The substances vary, as does the intensity of the wave, but the problems are not new. For decades, local families have faced these crises in every one of our communities. Even the prestigious Zip Codes. Or perhaps the truth is, *especially* in the prestigious Zip Codes. Here is an email I recently received that proves this point. It was signed "A Heart-Broken Mother."

I am a former resident of Plandome Heights. My son became involved in alcohol at the age of 13, then escalating to hard drugs shortly thereafter.

I tried everywhere and everyone for help with this problem. I reached out to other Manhasset parents to no avail. Their response was always "not my son/daughter." Trust me, my son was not doing this alone.

The avenues I took for help were extensive (the high school, police department, etc.) without any resolution. Everyone seemed to be looking the other way, including my ex-husband. He divorced me and took my son away from me.

Please enlighten parents that this is nothing to be ashamed of. Regardless of their "social status," they need to bring



FROM
THE EDITOR

**JOHN
OWENS**

this to light. Would they hide the fact that their child had cancer or another terrible disease? Remember, there is "strength in numbers." I was alone in my fight and accomplished nothing.

It has been 30 years, and my son has not recovered. I am grateful that he is still alive when most of his friends are deceased.

I am an Al-Anon mom and would like to help anyone who is facing this horrific, escalating problem here on Long Island and everywhere else.

Is this mother's experience being relived decades later by other families in our communities, even in those with the highest levels of education and income? I have no doubt. I believe that now, as then, the vast majority of people have little to no sympathy for addicts and their families.



And far too few people make serious efforts to head off substance abuse among their own children and those in their communities. But there are many good people are at work doing just that.

Consider, for instance, this mom's former hometown of Manhasset. Today, one of the most visible and active community groups is CASA — Manhasset Community Coalition Against Substance Abuse. As the group says on its website (www.manhassetcasa.org), it "exists as a resource to reduce the illegal, underage use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs among its youth before they are in trouble by connecting parents, school, and the community as partners in this common goal." Outreach in the schools and education for parents are CASA's primary tools. In a seasonal alert for parents, the organization points out that summer is the most popular time for teens to

Heading off problems is the mission of Manhasset's CASA. (Photo by Tab Hauser)

experiment with drugs and alcohol.

Prevention is the mission of CASA and groups in many other communities. Should the fangs of addiction take hold, parents must turn elsewhere. Though resources are sparse compared to the scope of the problem, there are places to turn. As the CASA site points out, good places to start locally are the Mineola-based Long Island Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (licadd.com), the Nassau Alliance for Addiction Services (www.nassaualliance.org), the Division of Addiction Treatment services at North Shore University Hospital (www.northshoreli.com) and Nassau County's Heroin Prevention Task Force (heroinprevention.com).

Is the situation better than it was when this mom started the fight to save her son? Perhaps marginally. Though today, the problems are even larger, and the battle is no easier. She's right — no one can win this alone. There is strength in numbers. And more of us should say, "Count me in."

John Owens is editor in chief of Anton Community Newspapers. Email: jowens@antonnews.com

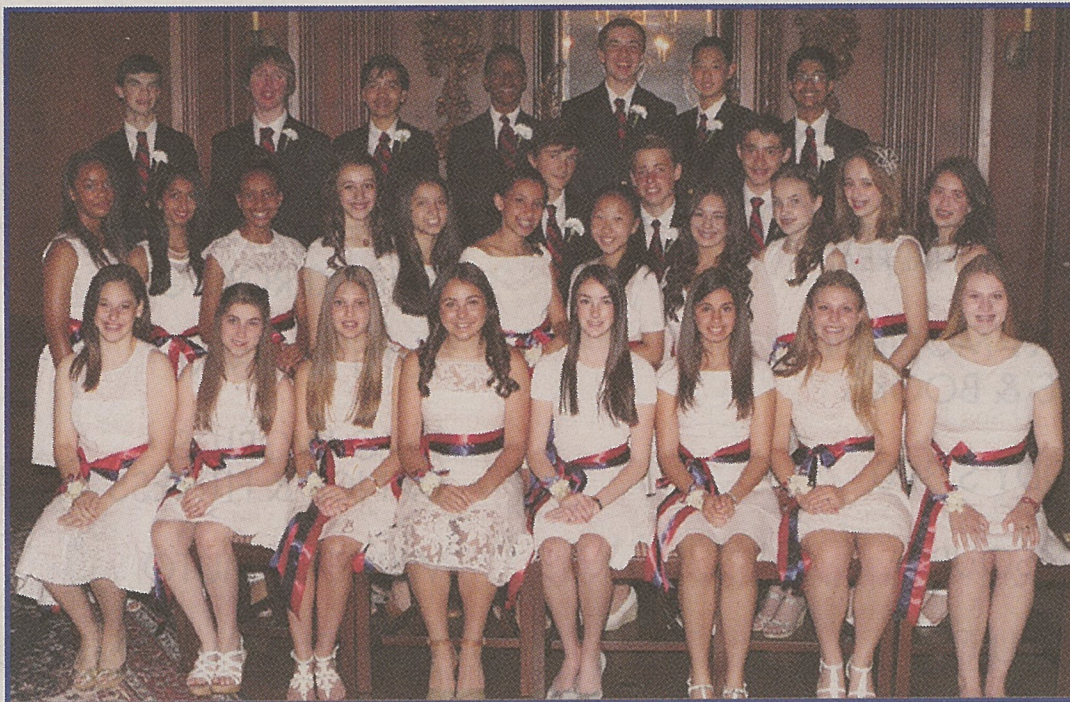
CONGRATULATIONS BUCKLEY CLASS OF 2014!

Front row, left to right:

Gia Yetikyel
Michelle Wisnewski
Kristina Sanoulis
Emma Deutsch
Olivia Lynch-Burgdorf
Eleana Tsiamtsiouris
Madison Rielly
Shay Mahon

Second row, left to right:

Sydney Hay
Krithi Ram-Junnarkar
Christina Bonaparte
Holly Kopke
Christiana Psyllos
Chloe Ventura
Julie Kim
Taylor DellaVecchia
Caroline Smith
Grace Limoncelli
Fiona Fragomen



Third row, left to right:

Michael Manu
James Fiechter
Themis Pappas

Back row, left to right:

Walter Stackler
Jacob Bolling
Kyle Cruz
Paul Sanon
Angelo Bonvino
Derek Chiang
Samir Aziz



The following are secondary schools to which Buckley graduates have been accepted and have chosen to attend.

NYC Independent Schools: The Brearley School, The Chapin School, Collegiate School, The Dalton School, Loyola School, Marymount School, The Spence School, Trinity School

Boarding Schools: Phillips Andover Academy, Choate Rosemary Hall, The Lawrenceville School, Hackley School

Long Island Independent Schools: Friends Academy, Portledge School

NYC Specialized High Schools: Bronx Science, Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Performing Arts

Catholic Schools: Chaminade, Fordham Preparatory School, Holy Trinity School, The Mary Louis Academy, Xavier High School

Public Schools: Herricks High School, Manhasset High School