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Strength, love of mother's message gift for community

Roane County News

OUR VIEW

When Oliver Springs High School senior Clayton Smith died of a drug overdose in November, we were shocked, saddened and then, sobered. It's not easy to deal with death, particularly the death of a teenager who has yet to fulfill his dreams and goals. It's hard to accept the loss of a loved one. Yet amid the tears and talk that accompanied Smith's death, his mother, Donna Forstrom, remained remarkably strong. "So many parents would want to sweep it under the rug. They would not want to admit that their child died of a drug overdose," Forstrom said, "But I'm proud of my son and the life he lived." Instead of crashing into depression or hiding from the situation, Forstrom has used her son's tragic death to help other teenagers. With her husband, Jon, Forstrom made T-shirts to hand out to teens and their families about "Clayton's Lesson." His lesson, Forstrom has explained, is don't use drugs. Forstrom didn't waste any time getting her son's message out to the community, believing it would have a larger effect on the teenage population while emotions were still running high. By putting aside her grief and pride to get an important message out to the community, Forstrom has probably helped save a number of lives. Our highest respect and praise go out to Forstrom for her courage, strength and love, both for her son and for her whole community.

Teen's overdose hits close to home for medical examiner

To the Editor:

The untimely death of Clayton Smith was an enormous tragedy and hit very close to home. His death should be a lesson to his friends and peers. Clayton died from taking prescription drugs as quoted in the Roane County News. However, these drugs were not prescribed for him. The opiate pills that killed him are normally used by people who are terminally ill and in great pain. There is no legitimate recreational use for these drugs. Someone gave or sold these pills and, like giving a child a gun, that person is responsible in some part for his death. Reality is hard enough on teenagers. Distorting it with recreation drug use arrests development and deprives the user of their future. It has deprived Clayton Smith of his future. Don't let drug abuse deprive you of yours.

W.E. Bennett, M.D., Roane County Medical Examiner