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Mother works to save others in son's name

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More than 70 people released balloons into a sharp wind at dusk Friday to continue a grief-stricken mother's crusade to call attention to drugs' dangers. Each balloon that drifted into the night above Clayton James Smith's gravesite at Oak Ridge Memorial Park had a special "Say No to Drugs" ribbon attached, said Clayton's mom, Donna Forstrom. "I hope God puts those ribbons in the hands of someone who needs help," she said. Friday was the first anniversary of the death of the popular 17-year-old Oliver Springs High School student, who, since infancy, had been nicknamed "Superman" because of his fondness for that fictional character. Friends, family and those who went to school with Clayton gathered for the brief ceremony that included a prayer and the singing of "Amazing Grace." Forstrom said she found her only child dead early Nov. 12, 2003. Clayton had accidentally overdosed by cutting open a morphine patch and eating its contents, Forstrom said. Such patches are supposed to be worn on the skin and provide two to three days of pain relief, she said. Forstrom said her personal nightmare has turned into an ongoing effort to issue a wakeup call to young people about the dangers of drugs. "Within two weeks of his death, I didn't want it to be swept under the rug and have this happen to another child," she said. "My hope in doing all this is to raise awareness." She created a pamphlet for parents that gives tips on telltale signs of drug use. She started passing out the pamphlet at Christmas parades and other public events. More than 10,000 copies have been distributed, she said. "My garage has turned into a warehouse for drug literature," Forstrom said. An Oak Ridge resident, Forstrom has set up a website, www.claytonlesson.org that includes numerous links to antidrug sites. She's had special shirts made with the Superman logo on the chest and the Web site address emblazoned on the back. Several young people at Friday's ceremony were wearing them. She and her husband, Jon Forstrom, have become active in the Roane County Anti-Drug Coalition, and she's given speeches at area high schools. "It's like I've taken on a second full-time job," Forstrom said of her efforts. Forstrom said the illegal use of pain medication is as rampant as methamphetamine in East Tennessee. She's seen signs, though, that she's winning battles in the war. "Complete strangers thank me for what we've done," she said. "Just this past

Wednesday, another total stranger stood up at the Roane County Anti-Drug Coalition and commended me for my efforts. He said it helped to save his son.”