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Event to focus on overdose victims

By Bob Fowler

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On average, one to two people each month die from drug or alcohol abuse in Roane County, says a mom whose only son was lost to drugs. "It's something that a lot of people don't consider," Donna Forstrom said. Death comes in many forms because of drug and alcohol abuse, says Forstrom, who lives in the Roane County portion of Oak Ridge. A fatal case of pneumonia, for example, could have resulted from an immune system weakened by smoking methamphetamine, she said. Forstrom's son, Clayton Smith, died in November 2003. The 17-year-old cut open a morphine patch and ate the contents. Forstrom found his body. Since then, Forstrom has launched a one-woman crusade to call attention to drug dangers. She founded the nonprofit group Clayton's Lesson and is chairwoman of the Roane County Anti-Drug Coalition. Her latest anti-drug effort, "Vigil for Lost Promise," is scheduled 6-9 p.m. Thursday in Kingston City Park off U.S. Highway 70. The event "seeks to bring the friends and families together that have lost a child or a loved one to a drug overdose," Forstrom said. It's patterned after the Drug Enforcement Administration's first-ever vigil taking place the same day at DEA headquarters in Arlington, Va., she said. Planned in Kingston are displays from the East Tennessee Mobile Meth Task Force, the National Guard and other agencies, Forstrom said. Several guest speakers, from elected officials to drug counselors, are scheduled. A memorial wall, where pictures of loved ones lost to drugs may be placed, is also planned.