

OVERDOSE

FROM PAGE A1

Just another day, opening his door.

Instead, she discovered her son was dead, still wearing his headphones and holding the television remote.

The family later learned a heroin overdose was to blame. The news blindsided Pam and the rest of the family: dad Ken, sister Maria, 20, and brother David, 13.

"There was no sign he was doing any drugs," Pam said. "He seemed to be happy, always joking around and getting good grades. He was working very hard."

Pam thought an episode in which Jason was caught with pot and alcohol a year ago was behind him.

She gave him an ultimatum. He had to take and pass her drug tests and when he regained his parents' trust, he could get his driver's license.

Jason was on his way to achieving that goal, Pam said. She even held off on the drug tests for the past couple of months because he appeared on the right track, content and focused on the future.

While the family struggles with the whys and what ifs, Pam knows one thing: She won't let Jason's death be in vain.

She wants his classmates to know their lives are worth more than risking it all for an intense high.

"He had a kind heart and tried to make people feel good," Pam said. "He had such a bright future ahead of him."

Parents shouldn't wait until something is wrong to talk to their kids about the risk of taking drugs.

"They're all susceptible to this," she said of teens and drugs. And like it or not, hard drugs are available, she said.

Pam wrote an open letter to the students at Jason's school, warning them a high is not worth their lives or the pain it would cause their families.

Pam said she would tell them they're not invincible.

"You don't get a handle on drugs," she said. "They get a handle on you."

"I can't just sit back and do nothing about his death, I want to make somebody think."

Open letter to Farmington High School students

As you all know by now, our son Jason Starling died of a drug overdose. I want to address all of the students of Farmington High to talk a little about this situation.

Our hearts are breaking over losing him. All of you that knew him know I am not exaggerating when I say that Jason was a kind, intelligent, fun-loving young man. He certainly wasn't the type of guy anyone would look at an say "yep, that guy won't live to see 25 with his lifestyle."

Those that knew him could see his potential. He was headed off to do great things someday. Someday never came. Why? Why was his life cut short?

Jason was a good person that made some bad choices. Does this take away from any of the good that he was all about? Absolutely not. He is still the wonderful person he always was except one thing—now his father, brother, sister and I can only go visit him at Glen Eden.

How tragic. How frightening.

I'm sure some of you reading this have maybe done drugs at one time or another with Jason. I'm sure in your minds you thought "no big deal, we're just having fun." I know that's how Jason saw it.

Contrary to all the rumors, Jason's drug use was not as extensive as what is being said. I'm sure he used more than we, his parents, realized, but less than what the rumors say.

My point with saying that is, you don't have to be a hard core drug user to end up dead. It only takes one time, one mistake. What kind of a high is worth having your picture on a guard shack in the school parking lot with RIP next to it?

So many of you told me how you thought so much of my son and loved him like a brother. I want for you to help us honor Jason's memory.

Those of you that do use drugs, make a lifestyle change now. Please don't put your family through this horror. If death can come to

Jason through drugs it certainly can come for you.

Those of you that don't use drugs, when the time comes that you feel tempted, remember Jason. All of you let his spirit give you the strength when your strength is weak to make the right choice. Please don't let Jason's death be in vain.

Drugs are killing this nation. The drug dealers get money in their pocket while good people like Jason lie cold in a grave. I wonder what the person used the money for that he got from selling Jason the drug that took his life? Clothes? Fast food? Maybe more drugs that will kill another one of your friends?

Adults have tried for years to stop this. Programs like D.A.R.E. and the "Just say no to drugs" campaign, while wonderful ideas are just not working well enough. It's up to YOU, the youth of this nation to take back control of your futures.

Make good choices and realize that there is not a drug on earth worth the



Jason Starling

price of your life. Please help Jason's death to not be in vain and make the right choice when the time comes.

I will keep each and every one of you in my prayers and pray to God that none of you will be harmed or lose your life or ever have to bury another friend because of drugs.

The Family of Jason Starling

MOVERS/SHAKERS

Lifetime achiever

Dr. John Dunn of Farmington Hills has received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Michigan Optometric Association.

Dunn is a graduate of the Illinois College of Optometry and a life member of the Michigan and American Optometric Associations and is a previous winner of the state association's Optometrist of the Year and Keyperson awards.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is in recognition of outstanding service to the Michigan Optometric Association.

Resident creates memories

May Arvo, an active member of the Farmington Players, the Farmington Musicals, and a board member of the Longacre House, has recently become a Creative Memories consultant.

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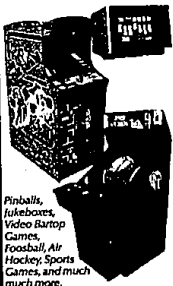
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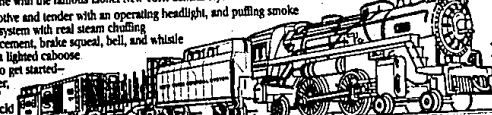
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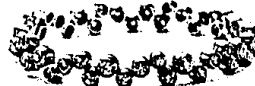


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