

Heroin victim's sister warns children

By AARON KRAUSE – **Norwalk Reflector, October 28, 2003**

Reflector Staff Writer

The call from the police officer had to be a mistake. Marci Davies' brother, Pete Rinner, couldn't have died from a heroin overdose -- not her 24-year-old muscular brother who was a straight-A student.

He knew the dangers drugs posed, and was her caring, loving best friend about to graduate from The Ohio State University with every reason to live.

It just couldn't be.

"That's how distant drugs are from our family," said Davies, a Norwalk native and daughter of Steve and Marcia Rinner.

But the policeman had the right phone number. Rinner had overdosed from heroin sometime between midnight and 6:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning in 1999, the officer informed Davies' father who, in turn, called her at work.

Davies spoke Monday to students in grades 4 through 8 at St. Joseph's Elementary School in Monroeville about her brother's ordeal, in recognition of Red Ribbon Week. She said that since 2001, she's tried to encourage more than 2,000 school children not to use drugs, using her brother's death as a motivational tool.

Davies told St. Joseph students she knew something was wrong with her brother several months before his death, he didn't call home as much, and his attitude toward his school, friends and family changed. Davies thought he was stressed out or depressed, and Rinner called to assure her everything was OK.

But the truth was quite the opposite, as Davies would learn on that Monday morning.

"That day was the hardest day of my life," the Norwalk High School graduate said. "I have a million questions running through my head every day."

Davies told students that her brother had "Superman Syndrome," in that he felt nothing could hurt him. She added that her brother was muscular, but a small woman overdosed from the same bottle that her brother had used -- and she's alive today. Drugs know no boundaries, Davies told students.

"It's not your size, it's not how muscular you are," she said. "It can happen to a good kid because he was a good kid."

While Davies told students she'll never be able to speak to her brother again, her purpose wasn't to make them feel sorry for her. Kids have a choice about whether or not to use drugs.

"Yes or no, it's really that simple," she said. "This stuff, just don't even mess with it. I have to go to the cemetery to visit my brother. I don't want you to go through that."

Red Ribbon Week first observed in 1985

The first local Red Ribbon Days event, sponsored by the Norwalk/La Mirada Grassroots Alcohol and Drug Education Project (GRADE) and the Norwalk Citizens Against Illicit Drugs, was held Oct. 28-Nov. 4, 1985 in the cities of Norwalk and La Mirada, Calif.

In October of 1986, Californians for Drug-Free Youth, Inc. sponsored the first statewide celebration of Red Ribbon Week.

In 1988, under the leadership of the National Family Partnership, with Nancy Reagan as honorary chairperson, Congress proclaimed the first eight-day Red Ribbon Week. Since then, the Red Ribbon movement to raise drug awareness has been celebrated by millions of students and teachers, along with community organizations, service clubs, businesses, faith communities and law enforcement agencies.

Today, Red Ribbon Week is held in thousands of schools and communities all across America.

For more information, visit www.redribbonresources.com