

Dozens gather to remember those who died of drug overdoses

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STUART — Intermittent showers and cool breezes couldn't discourage about 100 people who gathered Tuesday night to remember those who died of drug-related causes and to back efforts to prevent drug abuse and provide support for those in recovery.

Sponsored by the Narcotic Overdose Prevention and Education Task Force, the candlelight vigil at the Memorial Park band shell featured grieving parents of children who died from overdosing on illegal drugs and a videotaped address from Bill Janes, director of the state Office of Drug Control.

Janes called for tougher laws governing dispensing of such powerful painkillers as Oxycontin.

Sgt. John Budensiek of the Martin County Sheriff's Office Drug Enforcement Unit said Oxycontin and other illegally acquired prescription pain medications have become the drugs of choice here in the past eight years.

"Many of these people are innocent drug users, folks who were prescribed painkillers for an injury and gradually became addicted to them," he said.

That what Rose Bonnie-Bosley said this happened to her daughter, Danielle.

"She was a beautiful girl, a cheerleader, on the volleyball team and she was given prescription painkillers for a back injury," said Bonnie-Bosley, a founder of the local NOPE chapter. "She became dependent on these drugs. The last time I spoke to her, she was celebrating a birthday at her sister's home. She died later that day."

Marty McCormick spoke of the loss of his 22-year-old daughter, Meghen.

"She had been clean for more than seven months," he said. "She was excited about life again, had become engaged and was singing and playing a guitar I had given her for Christmas.

"The day after Christmas 2006, an old drug buddy called her and she went and shot up and overdosed," he said. "She was on life support at JFK (Hospital, West Palm Beach) for a week but was brain dead, and we finally made the terrible decision to pull the plug.

"I cried until my face hurt. If you care about yourself or someone else, don't touch this garbage," he exhorted the crowd between sobs.

During the speeches, images of those who have died of drug overdoses or in drug- and alcohol-related traffic accidents were flashed on a screen behind the stage. Most were teens, one only 13.

