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Firefighter Mike Pjosvold is one of a team of firefighters in training for an Ironman competition to support fellow firefighter Scott DePuy. The DePuy family has started an organization to help families with children suffering from addiction.

Mark Lowry/Reporter

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Sammamish firefighters hope triathlon will get anti-drug fund going

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On April 10, Scott and Charlene DePuy's lives were shattered.

That was the day that their 17-year-old son Ryan was found dead of a presumed accidental overdose from prescription drugs.

The DePuys aren't sure exactly what happened that day. The death certificate won't be final until the tox screen comes back, but Ryan's death is believed to be an accidental overdose.

What they do know is on that day their son died after a relapse in his ongoing struggle with addiction to prescription drugs.

"He'd been clean and sober for eight months," Scott DePuy said. "He was winning the battle."

The DePuys don't want another family to go through their pain, and they don't want Ryan's death to be in vain.

After Ryan's death, the family asked for money in lieu of flowers in case they couldn't pay for Ryan's memorial. There was no life insurance money because Ryan had attended rehab in January of 2007. The DePuys ended up with about \$4,600 left over. They wanted to put it toward helping someone else pay for rehab, but that amount wouldn't have even paid for half of a rehab stint.

So, Scott and Charlene started Ryan's Solution, a fund that hopes to help not only those struggling with prescription drug addiction, but also their families.

And Scott's "other family" — firefighters he works with — are running, biking and swimming to help.

Scott has been a firefighter since 1999 with Eastside Fire and Rescue, and is currently based out of the Sammamish station.

The bond between firefighters is iron strong, and to prove that, his fellow firefighters throughout EFR are participating in the 2008 Ironman 70.3 Lake Stevens World Qualifier.

Lake Stevens has special significance because Ryan spent most of his childhood in Lake Stevens before his parents moved to Bothell. Ryan spent 14 years there and still is remembered by many in the community.

The group of firefighters, members of Union Local 2878, are using the triathlon as a way to bolster Ryan's Solution, to help get the fund going, as well as a way to bring attention to it.

Firefighter Ben Lane thought of the idea.

"The DePuys really wanted to take something from the tragedy and started the (fund) in his name," Lane said. "We used (the triathlon) as a focal point to try and raise some awareness."

So Lane approached the DePuys about gathering a group of firefighters to participate in the event in honor of Ryan and to raise money for Ryan's Solution.

"I can't tell you anything has elated me in the past eight weeks," Scott said. "Every day is a struggle ... but this made us really happy. We and the fund really needed something to push through the summer. It's a shot in the arm to keep the ball rolling."

Each of the three shifts at EFR — A, B and C — have a relay team with one person swimming, one person biking and one person running a leg of the event. Lane will be the only member of the crew completing the Ironman as an individual.

With the exception of Lane, none of the firefighters participating have ever done a triathlon before, but they have already put in many hours of training to prepare for the big day.

“There will be struggles throughout the event,” Lane said. “It’s representative of the struggles of someone facing addiction.”

With the money brought in, the DePuys hope to get Ryan’s Solution up and running.

The hope is that Ryan’s Solution can bring funding to help those affected by rehab, the cost of rehab as well as support for families throughout the process.

The DePuys also hope that the awareness about prescription drug use can be brought up, that grandparents and parents with pills know the warning signs of drug use and keep their pills locked up.

“Currently the only parents that (are required by law) to have a lock up for drugs are foster parents,” Scott said. “It’s like securing your guns.”

Bringing about a support group for parents of kids with addictions is also a plan, something that DePuys feel is missing from the area.

“There’s a sense of embarrassment, of ‘It’s your fault,’” Scott said. “There is a need for a higher level of support for parents throughout the whole roller coaster of rehab. Parents can be stretched to the max.”

The teams from EFR will compete on Sunday, July 6 in Lake Stevens. Donations can be sent to Union Local 2878 Attn: Ryan Anderson, P.R. P.O. Box 594 Issaquah WA 98027.

“Ryan was a wonderful boy, and he’s greatly missed by his mom and I,” Scott said. “You don’t have to be a ‘bad kid’ to have this happen to you.”

The teams:

A shift

Pete Wilson swimming based out of station 72

Ryan Anderson biking based out of station 72

Jason Stotler running based out of station 85

B shift

Mike Pjosvold swimming based out of station 85

Wayne Parker biking based out of station 82

Frank Danlquist running based out of station 85

C shift

Kyle Houston swimming based out of station 71


Jon Parkinson biking based out of station 72

Mark Vetter running based out of station 87

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