

1-29-25

To: Facing Fentanyl

In the early morning hours of June 21, 2020, I received a phone call that changed my family forever. The call was from my youngest daughter who told me her sister was found deceased on her bedroom floor shortly before midnight the night before by her son, Isaiah. Hearing my daughter, Shawna, was gone was the worst thing I have ever endured in my 60 years of life. I remember crying out no, no, no and dropping to my knees on the floor. The shock and devastation of such a loss are indescribable.

We were told by the investigator in her case that she likely died from fentanyl poisoning and that was later proven to be true per toxicology and autopsy reports. The person who sold her a pill that my daughter thought was percocet is currently in prison after pleading guilty to 3rd degree murder.

Shawna had a history of substance use disorder but had gone through treatment and was a productive member of society for 2 ½ years after treatment. We believe the Covid-19 lock downs in MN causing her to be without work as well as unable to easily access medical care for her chronic spinal stenosis and migraines were a contributing factor to her seeking a percocet from an acquaintance.

My daughter was a graduate of two different vocational school programs and had worked at medical and insurance businesses. She raised her son, Isaiah, by herself. She was vibrant, outgoing, spontaneous, enjoyed meeting new people and loved travel.

An additional devastating fact of our family's loss is that the day she died was Isaiah's 20th birthday and he is the one who found her. Not only is he learning to be a young adult without any parents to give him advice and support, he suffers with anger and grief from the trauma of his loss which is undoubtedly exacerbated by his mother dying on his birthday.

Shawna was a loving sister and aunt. Her siblings miss her terribly and have slowly been working to accept that she will not be here to grow old with them. Her nieces and nephews are heartbroken without her in their lives to do fun things with them and encourage them as they grow up. As her mom, I am not the same person and grief is now my constant companion. One day my daughter was here and the next day she was gone. I miss not only the past we had with her, but feel great sorrow over what might have been and what she is missing.

Losses like these should not be happening. They are senseless and this illicit fentanyl crisis needs to be stopped. Thank you for taking time to here my daughter's story.

Julie Baumgard, mom to Shawna Vojak forever 37



