

The Tony Brown Foundation, LLC

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From: Gina Mattei

Date: March 17, 2017

To: TCF National Conference

I am writing to request consideration for the 2017 scholarship to the TCF conference to be held in Orlando, FL on July 28-30.

On Wednesday, February 17, 2016, I awoke at 5:30AM to sounds coming from my son's bedroom. I went in his room and found him unresponsive, lying on his back having what seemed to be a seizure. I would later find out that my son had overdosed from the drug fentanyl which he ingested hours earlier. My son's name is Louis Ahearn.

I cannot appropriately describe what my life is like now in a few short words. My son died 13 months ago today, and a huge part of me died as well. I function day to day. I go to work. I have another son who is 21 years old. He and I have a very different relationship than the one I had with Louis. His name is David. We are a two legged stool hobbling around without our Louis.

I went to a compassionate friends meeting a few weeks after my son died. It was too soon. People were too cheerful. But I remember Anne very well. She greeted me and in her eyes I knew I was not alone. I attended the Tony Brown Foundation Candle lighting event in Shelton at Christmas time and it was really special. The TCF online group has been a life saver for me. I cannot stress enough what I would do if I did not have that group to express and receive love and pain and sorrow and hope.

It has been a rollercoaster journey with absolutely no road map. I wanted to go to the conference last year but I was barely functioning mentally and maybe it would have been too soon.

This year I want very much to attend. I need to attend and so does Louis's brother David. There is so much to uncover in our grief and pain and maybe this conference would be a safe place to at least start to process our loss. I suspect we are both still in denial. We both have guilt.

My deceased son Louis was not a regular drug user. He never went for help for addiction because he showed no signs of addiction. He was depressed and bi-polar and he had a learning disability. He was in therapy and resources for all of that. He covered up his depression. But I knew. He had tooth pain from an extraction and decided to experiment with a drug given to him by a supposed friend. There are no words to describe the shock and disbelief.

For me personally, I ache for my son every day. We had a special bond. I know all parents have bonds with their children. Our story is unique to us and to others as well. It is too long of a story to put into a page.

I would love to come to the conference with my son David. David is graduating in May from UCONN with a biology degree. Prior to his brother's death his plan was to attend medical school. All that has changed now. He has no plans to continue his studies at this time. David is different now that his only sibling and his best friend is gone. I want him to heal and be okay.

The conference is an expense that is out of my reach. Therefore, I am applying because if there is a chance we could get some financial support, I might be able to make the trip with my surviving son.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gina Mattei- Louis's Mom

