

Family tries to find good after '12 SnowGlobe tragedy

By Janelle Wetzstein, Argus-Courier

No parent wants to admit their child is using drugs. No parent wants to accept that drugs contributed to their child's death. And no parent wants to think that if only their child stuck with a friend, they might still be alive.

But in the past year, Petaluma's Kevin and Kim Byrne endured all three tragic scenarios.



There was a candlelight vigil in South Lake Tahoe for Alyssa Byrne last January. Photo/LTN file

"Sometimes I think we're still dealing with it as if it happened yesterday," Kevin Byrne said Monday afternoon. "We're getting by, one day at a time, but it's difficult."

It's been a year since Kevin Byrne said goodbye to his 19-year-old daughter Alyssa as she headed off to the annual SnowGlobe music festival in South Lake Tahoe. Hours after ringing in the New Year and the end of the concert, Alyssa was nowhere to be found.

Her body was discovered days later in a nearby snow bank. An

autopsy found she likely died of hypothermia, and a toxicology report revealed she had large amounts of methamphetamine and psychoactive drugs in her system. Her drug use, coupled with the location of her body, caused authorities to speculate that Alyssa Byrne tried to walk to her hotel to avoid the long lines at the shuttle bus after the concert concluded, and then became disoriented in the freezing temperatures.

While many parents would break down after such loss, the Byrnes instead spent the past year helping young adults fight substance abuse and reminding young people of how important a buddy can be when partying.

“At least a dozen kids have reached out to me since Alyssa died,” said Kevin Byrne. “They’ve asked for help with serious substance abuse problems. I’ve sat through many Narcotics Anonymous meetings with them. It’s incredible that this tragic circumstance has helped other people.”

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