

Fentanyl poisoning

Local mom wants to spread awareness of the dangers of fentanyl

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Staff Reporter

On Monday, 18 billboards went up around the Triad with faces of those the community has lost due to fentanyl poisoning. One of those faces was Walkertown local Christian Wilson who died from fentanyl poisoning in 2019. The billboard reads, "Join us and fight illicit fentanyl. Christian, Forever 19."

Christian's mother, Crystal Wilson, of Walkertown, has made it her mission to help others who are going through this and to also help bring awareness to the rising issue of fentanyl in the county, state and country.

She explained that the 18 "angels" on the billboards, including her son, are only a fraction of the people that North Carolina has lost to fentanyl poisoning.

"We say poisoning, not overdose. It is a poisoning because they don't know



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The mother of Christian Wilson helps bring awareness to the rising issue of fentanyl deaths.

Fentanyl

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what they're taking," Wilson said. "An overdose is taking too much of a known substance. They don't know that this is there, so it's considered a poisoning."

Most of the time, people believe that they are taking another substance, which has unknowingly been laced with the highly addictive opioid.

"It is highly addictive," she said. "It is actually 100 times more addictive than morphine and stronger than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin. They say if most [people] that do make it, if they were poisoned, they end up being addicted to it."

The billboards were created by Forgotten Victims of North Carolina and they were first put up on Monday, May 29 and will stay up until the end of June. Christian's billboard can be found near Stratford Road in Winston-Salem on the interstate.

In North Carolina, from 2013 to 2022, there were 13,376 deaths due to fentanyl poisoning. In Forsyth County, fentanyl deaths from 2013 were 14% of all drug deaths while in 2022, 83% of drug deaths were caused by fentanyl.

"It's the leading cause of death for ages 18 to 45," Wilson said. "It's killing infants, toddlers in their homes or babysitters' homes with coun-



Christian was only 19 when he was poisoned from fentanyl in 2019.

terfeit pills. Six out of 10 pills have a deadly dose of fentanyl in them."

She continued to explain that North Carolina is number six in the nation for fentanyl deaths. Even though the number of deaths is rising due to this drug, she does not exactly know why it's on the rise while other drugs are relatively declining. She assumes since fentanyl is cheap and easy to push, it makes it easier to lace other substances.

"My son thought he was taking one thing and it was 100% fentanyl and he had nothing else in his system

other than nicotine," Wilson said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), deadly doses of fentanyl are not easily detectable and even says it is "nearly impossible" to tell if drugs or other items have been laced without the use of fentanyl test strips. The inexpensive strips can mean the difference between life and death, but they are not foolproof either. Small amounts of fentanyl can sometimes go undetected even with the test strips.

"There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illicitly manufactured fentanyl," said the CDC. "Both are considered synthetic opioids. Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain, especially after surgery and for advanced-stage cancer. However, most recent cases of fentanyl related overdose are linked to illicitly manufactured fentanyl, which is distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, which makes drugs cheaper, more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous."

Christian was only 19 when he was poisoned from fentanyl in 2019.

"The other things I can talk about easily and it just hits me harder," she said explaining who Christian was

and what his personality was like. "He's my baby. He had a 6 ½-month-old son when he passed away, he's four now. Christian, Jr., he's pretty amazing. Christian was a good kid. He loved to skateboard. He was funny. He always wanted to make you laugh. He's the only person in life that can make me laugh so hard that I couldn't stop laughing, like this little tummy laugh where he would even look at me and say, 'why are you still laughing?' Which would only make me laugh harder because he knew what he was doing."

She continued.

"He was an amazing big brother. He's got a little brother, a little sister and a stepbrother. He liked to hunt and fish. He liked to eat. He was my taste tester. Everything I cooked, he had to come and taste it and tell me how it was. Cooking was a hard thing after losing him, grocery shopping and cooking."

Christian graduated from Walkertown High School and was working at Domino's to support him and his family.

"I think everybody needs to know and a lot of people still don't know about it and I didn't know about it," Wilson explained. "Maybe if I would have known about it in 2019, maybe my son would still be here. I don't

want any mom to have to feel the way that I feel every day."

Spreading awareness about this issue and concern might help others realize the dangers of this synthetic drug that could easily be laced with this harmful drug, she said.

"It's not safe. It's the most unsafe time to be a teenager right now in this world. It's taking out a whole generation," she said. "It's the future of my kids. It's the future of your kids or grandkids. We've got to teach them the safety of it. My son is eight and he's in third grade and he will tell you, don't take anything from anyone because it's mixed with Adderall. It's mixed with all kinds of things. They're putting it into the vapes that they buy off the streets. It's sprayed onto marijuana. It's everywhere."

Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina (<https://fentanylvictimsnetworknc.org/>) is a non-profit that helps bring awareness of this ongoing issue in the community, and Wilson volunteers with this non-profit any way that she can.

"Know you're not alone and we're doing everything we can to save someone else's kid," she said,

To learn more about fentanyl, go to fentanylvictimsnetworknc.org.