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manent vision impairment that seems to be from a head injury sustained while high, the Booses' youngest son will forever be changed from opioids.

"Addiction is a disease, an inability to stay away from whatever it is that's gotten a hold of you," said Steve. "And it has broken us so many times. We would wonder if our marriage was coming to an end, if our lives were coming to an end."

And while it might not sound like it, Austin may be one of the lucky ones - according to statistics from Halton Region's latest opioid monitoring report, there were 30 possible opioid-related deaths among Halton residents between January and September 2018 (the most recent time period for which data was available).

"There were more confirmed opioid-related deaths among Halton residents in 2017 (40) compared to every previous year," adds the report. "The most deaths have occurred among people aged 25 to 44."

That same year, the rate of opioid-related deaths among residents of any age was seven per 100,000 in Halton, compared to nine deaths per 100,000 in Ontario.

"From 2013 to 2017, the rate of opioid-related deaths has increased in both Halton and Ontario," says the report.

Opioids are also responsible for their fair share of 911 calls, with Halton Region paramedics responding to 19 calls in January 2019 alone for suspected overdoses - more than double the nine calls received in January 2018.

It's statistics like this that motivate the Booses to share what they can about the potentially fatal drug with other local residents whose loved ones are struggling with addiction.

"We have to do something, we have to talk to people," said Kathleen. "This is about getting the word about these dangerous drugs."

While the driving force behind the upcoming Circles Around Addiction workshop was the Booses'



Kathleen Boose

Steve and Kathleen Boose's son, 20-year-old Austin.

Municipality	Number of calls
Burlington	51
Oakville	49
Milton	34
Halton Hills	22
Total	156

Halton Region graphic

faith, Steve emphasized that the sessions - which will run from 1 to 3 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. on March 27 - are not formal church events and are open to anybody looking for resources and support.

"We're not coming at this from religion - this is people helping people," he said. "We're doing this as mom and dad. We've got to stand with each other in circles, because you can't stand alone and have the strength to deal with it."

The event will include speakers from Halton Regional Police, ADAPT and Nar-Anon, along with the pharmacist from Georgetown Pharmacy, which serves as the location of a local clinic that administers opiate replacement therapy. A three-generation family that has also been affected by addiction will also be taking part in the presentations.

To make the space comfortable and welcoming for everyone, a quiet room will be provided during the workshops, along with adult colouring books and

refreshments; the church will also remain open between sessions.

"Our ultimate goal is to love and comfort people in pain," said Kathleen. "People involved in the opioid crisis need love, whether it is the addict or those around them."


When the mother of three told her youngest of their plans for the workshop, she said that he voiced his support. Unfortunately, he won't be able to attend as he remains in jail.

"He said, 'Mom, do you think I want this life? If you can save one person, then it's worth it.'"


For now, Kathleen finds a small amount of solace in Austin's imprisonment.


"At least I know where he's sleeping," she said tearfully. "When he's in jail, we hear from him every day."

Knox Presbyterian Church is located at 116 Main St. S., Georgetown. For more information, contact Kathleen Boose at 905-703-0581 or kathleen.circle2@gmail.com.



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