

In memory of James P. Byrne



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

I write this month's column on the heels of the news reporting the death of Robin Williams. That evening, while on Facebook, I noticed messages posted from my daughter expressing her sadness over the loss of such a talented artist who brought so much joy to so many people through so many years.

That evening I recalled thinking about the movie "What Dreams May Come," in which Robin Williams' character, Chris, had died and gone to heaven, later to discover that his wife was stuck in the "lower realm" as a result of taking her own life. The rest of the movie is focused on Chris rescuing his wife from the lower realm.

Most of us cannot fathom a point in our lives where we give up all hope and decide that suicide is the only way out. There are thousands of stories of the events leading up to a suicide that rips your heart out. In many of the stories, but not all, we discover substance addiction issues were contributory.

"Open your arms and your heart to your loved ones and your co-workers. We can help each by opening a conversation on chemical dependency and/or depression and in turn guide someone to assistance that is available."

I reached out to Patrick Byrne, Lynn, MA Branch 7 president and a good friend, whose family suffered a tragic loss earlier this year, not from suicide, but from chemical dependency. Pat was willing to share his story so that it may lead to helping others. The following is the eulogy written for his son James:

James P. Byrne, 40
Cherished by Family

Jamie Byrne, age 40, of Lynn, died on Saturday, January 25, 2014 after a long battle with the disease of addiction.

Jamie was born, raised and educated in Lynn. He was a graduate of Breed Jr. High, Classical High School and Boston University. He was employed by Watertown Supply.

Jamie loved music, reading and mixed martial arts. He enjoyed traveling, especially with his family.

His greatest joy, however, was his family and friends. There was no one more caring, loyal or loving than Jamie. He helped so many others with their struggles, only to succumb himself. He was completely unselfish in helping anyone struggling with their recovery. He had numerous life-long friendships, demonstrated by the outpouring of sympathy and support to his family.

He was the perfect uncle, treasured by his two nieces and his nephew. He loved and received love and support from his sister and brother-in-law. He treasured the time he spent with his uncles and their wives and knew that his love was matched by theirs. He was dedicated to his grandparents, often working together with his grandfather. Jamie was a pure gift to his parents and they treasured their time with him.

Jamie is survived by his parents Pat and Kathy Byrne of Lynn, his sister and brother-in-law Tracy and Jeff Rock, his nieces Aliya and Anilee Rock, his nephew Cyrus Rock, his grandparents Thomas and Virginia Carey, his uncle Gerry Byrne, his uncles and aunts Tom and Jody Murray, Greg and Jean Byrne, Jim and Dianne Byrne, and his many loving cousins.

Services will be private, but the family asks that readers take the time to tell their children that they love them.

I admire the courage and the strength shown by Patrick and his wife Kathy in sharing their story, in memory of their son James. Patrick also shared the following with me: "Since my loss, I have discovered how many families have been affected by this problem. Several members in my own branch have shared their stories with me regarding their own children's struggles. When I made our story public, hundreds of families contacted me and articulated that they fought this problem while trying to protect their privacy, a choice that they now regret...I currently counsel parents of addicts, addicts and law enforcement about the underlying problems associated with this epidemic. The disease of addiction is far reaching and impacts more people than we would think."

After you read this, open your arms and your heart to your loved ones and your co-workers. We can help each by opening a conversation on chemical dependency and/or depression and in turn guide someone to assistance that is available.

Make the Call!

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