Before we begin today's episode where we address the Fentanyl crisis, I want to invite everyone to the 2022 Central Florida Fentanyl Summit  **August 21st 1P-3P,  doors open at 12:30
Cocoa Beach Country Club
5000 Tom Warriner Blvd
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931**

You will hear from subject matter experts, and there is time allocated for questions and answers. For additional information, visit www.BluePlaid.org. We hope to see you there.

Welcome back. This is Jen Lee, the creator and host of I Need Blue Podcast, Survivors Talk Surviving. To hear additional stories, visit www.ineedblue.net.

 Please note, I Need Blue does contain stories which feature graphic content and could be triggering. Please seek help if needed. Remember, you always come first.

Today my guest is Suzy Pereira of the Blue Plaid Society. Suzy lost her son in November of 2021, not even a year ago, to fentanyl poisoning. Fentanyl is the deadly synthetic opioid that has contaminated the illicit drug supply and is killing thousands of Americans. In fact, it is the number one cause of death of Americans ages 18 to 45, more than car accidents, suicide, and gun violence combined. In the wake of her tragedy, Suzy started a nonprofit, the Blue Plaid Society, named after her son's iconic style of wearing blue plaid shirts. The Blue Plaid Society exists to warn and educate the public about this deadly drug.

I wanted to start off today's conversation reading to you a headline that I saw on the news. It was this:  Washington man arrested after 91,000 fentanyl pills discovered hidden inside a chip container. And when I say chips, I mean, potato chips. This individual was linked to a transnational criminal organization.

Suzy, how did you first learn about fentanyl?

Suzy
I first learned about fentanyl 30 minutes after I found my son dead in his room. I came into his room that morning to wake him up for work, as I always did.  I found him passed out on the floor, kind of in like a downward dog yoga position. I thought that was so strange. I thought he must have fell out of his chair that way. I turned him over and realized immediately he wasn't breathing and he was purple on his face and his hands.  I ran across the house and grabbed my phone on the way back. I flicked on all the lights, flew the front doors open, called 911, and began CPR right away. I tried to revive him, but what I didn't know was he had already  passed for a couple of hours .

The emergency team arrived and pronounced him dead. There was officers at my house, and an investigator had arrived quickly. She explained to me that your son probably had a bad batch. And I said, " A bad batch of what? What do you mean?"  She explained fentanyl and how deadly it was, and that probably the drugs  he had used or ingested contained fentanyl. It does suppresses the breathing, which causes the person to die very, very quickly.  That was the first time  I learned about it. I was shocked.

Jen
Did you ever find out  what pill he had been taking or thought  he was taking?

Suzy
Oh, yes. There was a lot of evidence as to how it all unfolded. In the summer of 2021, my son was really struggling. He had gone through a bad breakup with a young lady. He had been assaulted by two men that beat him; he took about 20 blows to the head as a result of dating this young lady. There was some bad stuff that went down,  he was jumped, and he received a brain injury from that beating.  So he was really struggling with that.  He had slurred speech, loss of balance, outburst, everything associated with a traumatic brain injury.

Then he turned 26 and  fell off of his dad's health insurance.  I thought I could get him a policy. That all i had to do was  call up and get a policy, and it doesn't work that way. You negotiate a policy and then they turn it on like a month later. So my kid was walking around with a brain injury and no access to medical care or the neurologist  he needed to see.

He lost his grandmother, and he was really in a spiral. He was using Xanax which he was getting from a friend.  He got arrested for having two Xanax in his pocket which were not prescribed to him. He was in a free fall.

He went to recovery because he recognized he was in this free fall, and he was using alcohol and recreational  drugs to combat all the symptoms, the depression and the anxiety he was having.  When he got out of recovery, he was good for about a week. Then he slowly started returning back to the people  he had been hanging out with.  All were recreational users. For some reason  those drugs weren't  doing it for him anymore. He tried heroin. He had tried heroin when he was 20 for a few weeks, but I caught him and we intervened pretty quickly. On  his own, decided to stop using that. But for some reason after his time in recovery, he went back and tried to use heroin again.

What he was sold was not heroin. It was a mix of cocaine, meth, and fentanyl. When he injected it, I think it was about the second or third time, from what I could tell from the text messages and the instant messages he had with people, it was either the second or third time he did it. But it was lethal. It contained enough fentanyl in it to kill twelve people. He succumbed to it very quickly.

Jen
Wow. So as a mom myself, I guess I'll just ask this question. Did you feel helpless?

Suzy
 I did feel helpless when I was trying to help him through that summer. So many things  happened, even more than I shared.  I did feel helpless at that time. When he went to recovery, I felt relieved. I thought, okay, at least the spiral will stop and he'll get out and he'll have a reset and he'll be able to start over.  I knew when he got out of recovery  he would probably relapse and go back to alcohol and recreational use and that this would be a pattern through his life.

Jen
How long was he in recovery?

Suzy
Only 28 day.
He could have stayed longer, but he was bored and ready to come home. I fought it. I cried. I was like, no, don't.  Just stay there, please. He's like, Mom, "I've learned everything I'm going to learn here. I got to get out and try it on my own."  I went and picked him up. With Fentanyl,  you don't have time to keep bringing your child or your loved one back to rehab. My son didn't have time to become a drug addict. He didn't have time to become a heroin addict. After the second or third shot, he was dead. He didn't have time to go back to recovery and try it all again. It cuts your life short. Just like that.

Jen
 How would you describe Fentanyl?

Suzy
Well, after my son died, I've done a lot of research on it. So Fentanyl is a highly powerful opioid, synthetic opioid. How it's made is China sells the precursors of this drug to Mexico, and the Mexican cartels and criminal organizations mix these precursors together in jungles and dirty labs and cattle ranches, and they put it into other drugs like heroin, cocaine, meth, and they press it into pills made to look like prescription medication. All of this is coming flowing over the border. The border agents, they try to catch everything they can, but really they're only catching about 10%.  This is why you see busts like you were talking about, where people have thousands of pills, millions of pills.

Jen
They're small. It's a very tiny pill.

Suzy
It only takes two milligrams to kill you. Two milligrams of fentanyl is equivalent to about four or five grains of salt, and that amount is lethal.

Jen
That is crazy. Suzy, drug dealers exist because they have clients, right? But if they kill their clients, there's no one to buy the drug. So why would drug dealers want to kill them?

Suzy
There's no such thing as an ethical drug dealer. In the 90's opioids were overly prescribed resulting in an addiction problem. Then they realized, wait we have a problem, leaving those who were addicted to go to the streets to get their drugs.  We now have 10-12 million people addicted to drugs rather than 3-4 million we've seen over the last several decades.  Drug dealers don't mind killing 100,000 people a year when they have millions to sell to.  It's just the cost of doing business.

Drug dealers will target youth, teenagers, young adults. They do so by using certain emojis. They know that these platforms, you can reach out to children, and then the communication vanishes. It is really as simple as ordering a pizza.

Jen
One thing I noticed, Suzy, is you are passionate about using the term "poisoning" when talking about these deaths. Can you explain to our audience the difference between poisoning and overdose?

Suzy
Yes, thank you for asking me that question because this is something I'm really passionate about. In the traditional drug overdose, the person knows what drug they are getting, whether it be a prescription drug or illicit drug. They understand the drug  they're getting, and they're actually getting that drug. They actually know what a dosage is, and they consume too much. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, they consume too much and they succumb to it. That is not what's happening with the Fentanyl. Fentanyl is being deceptively hidden into other drugs; cocaine, meth, heroin. It's being pressed into pills made to look like prescription medication. This medication is not percocet, adderall,  Xanax. It is a counterfeit pill that contains nothing but an expedient and Fentanyl by way of deception. That is why we call it a poisoning.

Let me explain a little further.  I like to tell people, you like to drink coffee or you like an energy drink. So your drug of choice is caffeine. You come over to my house and I give you a warm cup of coffee, you drink the coffee, it's very satisfying, and you get your caffeine with no harm coming to you.

Again, say your drug of choice is caffeine, and you come over my house and I give you a warm cup of brown water and I put Fentanyl in it. I tell you, here's your caffeine. You drink it and you die instantly. Well, you've been poisoned. I poisoned you. That's exactly what is happening. These people are hiding this harmful substance in other substances or in pills made to look like something else, and they're giving it to our children. They're giving it to our loved ones, and our children and loved ones are dying instantly from it. That is why it's a poisoning. There's no safe dosage of illicit fentanyl. Two milligrams will kill you, as we said earlier, just a few grains of salt  will kill you. That is a poisoning and it is an act of murder. And that's why we call Fentanyl the murder drug.

Jen
That is a great explanation, and I never thought of it that way. So thank you so much for sharing.  It's scary.

Suzy
Sometimes I have parents or loved ones come up to me and say, but my kid knew he was taking fentanyl, or she knew there was fentanyl in it. Just because they knew doesn't mean they weren't poisoned. If I hand you that cup of brown warm water and I say, hey, there's fentanyl in it, and you take it anyway, that doesn't mean you weren't poisoned. You were still poisoned. You're still poisoned by way of what the harmful substance was. That's how I explained that.

Jen
We understand how lethal it is, so why would a child then decide to take fentanyl?

Suzy
Typically with the children, especially ages 12 to 17, they do not understand that they're taking synthetic. They really don't. Usually these are first time experimenters, or they're recreational users just experimenting with drugs or different kinds of drugs. They really don't know about fentanyl. That is where the advocacy comes in. What we try to do at the Blue Plaid Society is inform parents  this is happening, this is really happening, and the threat is real.

When I'm on my campaign and trying to do that, a lot of times I'll run into parents and they'll say, "oh, no, I've taught my kid about drugs. My kid is a good kid. My kid would never do this." And that's wonderful, I'm so glad that they have done that, however, sometimes kids do dumb things, even when you tell them not too. That's just the nature of being human. Sometimes we take those risks even though we know we're not supposed to. We do it anyway. Or perhaps they had been drinking and they don't realize their inhibitions are down, and they think, oh, my friends are taking these pills, so I'll take one too. That can happen. And that's what we want to try to get out to people,  even if you think you've done everything right, please just listen to the message, please consider it, and please talk to your kids about it, just to give them one more layer of protection against this crisis.

Jen
How important is it that our children get this information?

Suzy
I'm very passionate about wanting to get into the schools, but, as a parent, I'd want to hear the message first myself and judge for myself when I should talk to my kids about this. I'm very respectful of that. Overall, what I would like to see is parents knowledgeable and on board with this, and parents agreeing to allowing Non-profits such as Blue Plaid Society to come in and talk to children with a regulated program to do so. We're not here to scare children. We're not trying to scare people. We're just trying to arm them with the truth and the sooner you can start talking to them about it, the better off they're going to be, the more knowledgeable they're going to be. We had a program when we were younger, the Just Say No campaign. It got a lot of criticism because they say it didn't work. I don't understand why people say it didn't work. It did work for me.

Jen
I do remember.  There was a  coloring book.

Suzy
When I was in school, I remember the moment someone was handing me a marijuana cigarette. I was like, "no, thank you."  I just said no and it worked for me.  What we try to say now is "SAY KNOW" which is just have the knowledge going forward that you're not just going to try this drug and wake up in the morning and say, man, I was really dumb. I wish I hadn't done that. If you try a drug these days,  including marijuana, because Fentanyly is being found in marijuana, now you have a chance of dying. Passing out may mean passing away.

Jen
What pushback do you foresee as to why parents might not want this message in the schools?

Suzy
In my advocacy groups, nonprofits, we do talk amongst ourselves, and  share resources etc. Some of my  peers, they have gotten push back because this is a very heightened, scary message we are putting out there. You take a drug and you die instantly. That's scary. You have to be very careful how you deliver that message to students and young people. You want to tell them the truth. You want to give them the knowledge, protect themselves, but you don't want to send them home freaked out.  If we do that, parents get very concerned. Parents call the school, hey, you're freaking out my kid. Hey, what are you telling me, he or she could die instantly? Is there a drug problem in the school? The message might get diluted. So I think it's very important to get the parents first, show them the curriculum or the learning plan, have them sign up to it, and then go forward.

Jen
You want their collaboration, you want them included, you want them there if they want to deliver a message as well. This is very much a community issue, and it's going to take a community coming together to bring that awareness. If somebody is listening and wants to help, wants to contribute, how do they reach out to you?

Suzy
To learn more at The Blue Plaid Society:
<https://www.instagram.com/theblueplaidsociety/>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheBluePlaidSociety>

https://blueplaid.org/

Jen
Can you tell everybody what Blue Plaid is and where the name came from?

Suzy
Yes. Thank you for asking me that. The Blue Plaid Society is a nonprofit organization that I founded. We were created to provide Fentanyl awareness and education to the public. The reason we call it the Blue Plaid Society is because my son always wore blue plaid shirts. He has tons of blue plaid shirts, and they're all still hanging in his closet. I still wear them. I wear them every once in a while when I want to be a little closer to him. Our logo is a skull and crossbones because we fully believe in the poisoning message. That's a nod to Tristan for his iconic style of wearing blue plaid shirts.

Jen
 Can you take me back to the moment you found your son? What was going through your head? Because there are so many parents, and I'm sure throughout your advocacy group, and others  parents who have experienced that same exact moment. Are you okay with sharing that with us?

Suzy
Yes, I can take you back to the moment . When I turned my son over, I realized there was an emergency happening. I spent twelve minutes giving him CPR, trying not to give up. There was a time when he was younger, age 16, and he was laid out on the front lawn and paramedics were giving him CPR for a different reason, and they brought him back. So I had  in my mind, I could save him. I could save him. Once the emergency teams arrived, they pulled me off of him and I just sat in the kitchen. They were only there for 3 minutes. They were only in the room for 3 minutes when they called it. They came out and told me, and I will never forget it. An officer coming into the kitchen, and very emphatically, softly as he could, he said, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but your son has passed." Those were his exact words.

When you hear those words in that moment, it's so final, it's so shocking, but you feel like you just hit a brick wall. The anguish! You go into thinking, how am I going to accept this? How am I going to live without him? Tristan was my only child and he was my best friend. It was he and I living in this house together. We live in a house that he chose. He loved this house and he chose it, and that's why I bought it. It's the most challenging thing in the world to keep on going and keep on living with something  you cannot change. The loss of your child is probably one of the most painful things you can ever go through because it doesn't make sense.

Jen
It doesn't follow the laws of life. So you were alone  when you found your son?

Suzy
Yes. It was just me. When I learned  he was gone, I took a few minutes and I told the officer, " I feel like I've got to fall to my knees."  She said,  "that's okay, go ahead, do it if you have to."  And I did. I just fell to my knees and the wind  was knocked out of me for several minutes. I don't  remember the call,  but I called my dad. He's my stepdad, but he's my dad. I told him and he  felt the same thing, the wind knocked out of him. He came over and I called one of my best friends and she came over.

The hardest thing for me during the month's following was dealing with that brick wall of I could not change this and I could not bring him back.  I had to figure out a way to keep living. How am I going to go on? He was everything to me. He was my only child who is my best friend. He was my heir who I was going to leave everything that I had worked for my whole life with the intention to bestow that upon him. Now I didn't even have that. What was the purpose for going on?

Through the Blue Plaid Society, I found a way to channel my pain into something else and to try to help other people from not going through the same experience.

Jen
How much time had gone by before you realized, wait, this is my mission?

Suzy
It was three months.

I have a story about the day I made up my mind to start The Blue Plaid Society. For three months, I was in a really dark place. There were a couple of nights where I just lost my mind.  A couple of nights, I was in so much pain. I would go in his room and lay down in the exact spot  I found him dead.  I would  cry, sob and just wish him to come back. Please come back. Please don't leave me. I was having a lot of suicidal ideations. There was one time I was taking a shower and I was like, you know what, this is it. I'm going to do it. I can't live this way. It's just too painful.

The window blind was up in the shower and the sun was streaming in.  I was getting out of the shower and I said, "that's it, I'm going to go buy a gun and I'm going to do it. I don't care. I'm not afraid to do it anymore."

 I was drying up and then it started to rain and I noticed the sun was out.  I remember thinking, oh, we're having a sun shower so I went to the window and  looked out.  There wasn't any clouds in the sky. Oh, that's interesting. This is true sunshine. Out of curiosity,  I went outside the front door and there were no clouds, but there was still a gentle rain coming down. I was like, "wow, this is crazy. Where's this precipitation coming from?"  So I decided to walk all the way around the house. I was thinking, there must be clouds miles off and the wind is just bringing it this way. I walked all the way around. There were no clouds in the sky, and I literally was finally standing on my front lawn looking down, and it was raining on me.

 Tristan knew  I loved the rain. I always loved the rain. Still do. I heard him speaking to me, "no, Mom, I see you. Look up, look up. You see, even through the rain, there is still light. "

I know there's probably some scientific explanation as to where the precipitation was coming from, but I choose to see that as a sign. In that  moment I was contemplating doing something very terrible, and in that moment I said, "all right, I see it, and I'll do what you want me to do."

The only thing I can do is tell my story and hope that other people take warning and maybe do something different to save their child or their loved one. Ever since then, I have never had a suicidal ideation. Ever since that day, my work keeps me  busy,  engaged, and I hope  I can  at least save just one person. That would be enough.

Jen
I think that's awesome. Let's talk about Narcan.

Suzy
Narcan is the antidote. It's a  nasal spray. It has four milligrams of ingredient in the  spray, and if you come upon someone who is in a situation where they may be succumbing to fentanyl or any opioid, you can spray that up their nose, turn them on their side, and keep trying to wake them up, keep trying to bring them around.  One minute later, if they're not come around, you spray another spray. Sometimes it might take three or four minutes to get that person to come around.  It blocks the receptors that are uptaking the opioid, so it reverses the effects of the opioid.

Jen
Do you think that would have helped your son with his situation?

Suzy
Well, interesting enough, I did have narcan in the house, but I didn't know that it was for an opioid reversal. I had been prescribed a sleeping medication in the past because I was dealing with my own anxiety, and I kept those pills in the safe. A lot of prescribers will coprescribe narcan with other types of medications.

My son had an open container of narcan in his backpack which was sitting in his closet.  I know for a fact  he did not use it that night he died. My son died with  a needle still in his arm. He succumbed to the  poisoning instantly. He didn't have a chance to use narcan that night.

Jen
So who should have narcan in their possession?

Suzy
In my opinion, it's every single person. But truly, obviously, if you have children or teenagers, you definitely want it. If you have people that are active in substance use disorder, I would definitely have it around.  I wouldn't be afraid of it. It's really just a nasal spray. It can't hurt you if you spray it up your nose. Nothing's going to happen to you if you're just not having a problem. So it's really harmless, but it's very effective for reversing opioid.

Jen
Did you reach out to support groups for yourself afterwards for support?

Suzy
I did. At first, I did find one group that was dealing with the loss of the child. They were very good people, but it was kind of the loss of the child through any means, and a lot of it was infant deaths and things like that, which is terrible and very sad, but I really wasn't able to share my story. I finally just kind of happened upon certain Facebook groups that deal specifically with fentanyl poisoning, overdose situations, parents that have lost children through death drugs. That's where I found my people who shared similar stories and experienced similiar things.  Many of these parents found their children the same way I did. So through that shared experience, I was really able to heal. I also sought my own help. I have a PTSD therapist that I see. She's amazing. I'm not afraid to say it. I think through transparency, that's how you help people. I still am getting treatment. That really helps me, it really helps me to stay on track.

Jen
Are you comfortable sharing some of the PTSD symptoms?

Suzy
At first, it was really just the anguish. I couldn't shake the anguish, and that's very normal. A lot of parents I talk to, even several years after their loved one has passed, they still are dealing with the anguish.  It's hard to even talk about your child or mention your child without tearing up or succumbing to crying. A lot of people are still in that, and it's certainly very understandable. I thought I was getting pretty good at overcoming, but the other day someone asked me, "are you still going to take that trip  you had planned?" I choked up and cried because that was a trip I had planned with my son. We were going to go to Denmark because he was Danish, so we were going to go to Denmark and see where he was in his home country. We planned to visit Norway and Sweden, and we were supposed to see a Queen concert . We never got to. My reaction to the question made me realize, wow! it's still there.

Another  PTSD symptom  is it's very hard to be around normal people who haven't been affected by this or haven't really lost a child or haven't gone through that specific type of trauma. I tried to go back to work, and everybody is around the water cooler talking about the basketball game or this or that, and you're just on a different plane. I certainly don't want anyone to have to go through this, but you do see the world through a completely different lens.  Those  chit chatty things, you can't take part in that any more. It comes benign conversation,  and not partaking during those times, does not lend themselves to having good relationships at work. So for now, I'm just continuing to work from home. I'm very fortunate that my company is understanding and allows me to do that. It's triggering to try to feel normal when you really don't.  And trying to get through your work day and walk around work and try to feel normal, it's very hard to do that.

Jen
You have a new normal now.

Suzy
Yes, absolutely.

Jen
Do you have the support you feel you need?

Suzy
I'm  fortunate  I am able to get the therapy, but I do have some really good friends that help me through this.  I have one particular friend, he's my Co-Chairman at the Blue Plaid Society.  He's also a very dear friend, and has shouldered alot. He's a great sounding board, and on days where I'm frustrated, I just kind of vent to him. He's calm, cool, and collected.

The other resource for my mental health is Tristan's friends.  Those kids ranging in age from 24 to 27,   and the 3 girlfriends he had, who I consider my daughters, grew up together. They always call and check on me. Sometimes I call them up in the middle of the day or end of the day and say, "hey, what's up? I just need to talk to someone."  They're really great. They come to me with their problems sometimes, and it's wonderful that I can still be a guide and  have that parental connection with some of the young people that were of Tristan's age. That really helps.

Jen
That's great. I never would have thought of that. I suppose the reason why is because we know everybody deals with their own grief in their own way, and sometimes we're afraid to reach out to others who also are close to the situation because we're a little apprehensive at where they're at in their healing process.  Did you feel any of that hesitancy when you went to speak with his friends? Or did you all instantly connect?

Suzy
No, there was no hesitancy in his friend group. They were here the night of  his passing by 10:00pm.  That morning, they all knew what happened, and they were all here when they were off work that night.

My son died on November 4. Christmas was going to be hard because I had such an amazing Christmas with Tristan and his girlfriend the year before. It was the best Christmas ever.  I was going to cancel Christmas for myself. But the kids said no, and they came over with their kids. The tree was up and the snacks were out;  it was overwhelming. I passed out on the couch, overwhelmed with emotion. They let me sleep for about 45 minutes, and then they woke me up and said, okay, time to wake up.

Jen
It's amazing how as humans, we have the ability to really make other people happy, feel supported and loved in their greatest time of need.

Suzy
Absolutely.

Jen
 I love that you  had that available to you and still do.

Suzy
Absolutely.

Jen
What is the message that you want to get out?

Suzy
It's really simple. I just want to ask people to know that Fentanyl exists. It changes everything. We're not dealing with the same drug paradigm from ten years ago. This is a new game, and it's very,  dangerous and no one is immune to it. This affects all walks of life. It doesn't discriminate whatsoever. All kinds of kids and young adults, older people are succumbing to this. My message is  know that it exists and please know it's extremely dangerous and please don't do any drugs at all. Please don't take anything that's not specifically prescribed to you.

Jen
We are at the point of telling our kids, don't take any pills. Part of the mission of my podcast is to share resources. I know you live in Brevrd County, Florida. If you have any particular resources here or groups that you would like to mention, now is definitely the time. Also you have an event coming up. I definitely want you to share all of the details on that because we would love to see all of our community, and all of our surrounding communities come and soak up all of the great information you are going to provide.

Suzy
Absolutely. One resource I'd like to call out is the Brevard Prevention Coalition. They are about drug free living. They're about addiction and recovery. I'm pointing to the coalition because there are a lot of people and a lot of organizations in the community of our county that feed into this coalition. If you want more knowledge or where you might be able to go, I would strongly reach out to them because they can help point you in the right direction depending on what your need is.

I would also like to talk about our event coming up on August 21, 2022 from 1p-3p. Doors open at 12:30. So August 21 is National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day. It is the day that Bereaved families have come together to recognize this crisis and to call attention to the over 1000 people that we lost last year alone to this. In recognition of that day, the Blue Plaid Society is hosting the 2022 Central Florida Fentanyl Summit. It's going to be kind of like a town hall. We have expert panelists that are coming to speak on the fentanyl crisis. We have representatives from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Beverard County Sheriff's Office, the Medical Examiner's Office, State Attorney's Office, and Brevard Prevention Coalition. The Blue Plaid Society, of course, will  be there to speak and then we will have a question and answer session. We're really excited about this. Seats are filling up really fast and we're excited that's happening.

Jen
How many people do you have coming thus far? We're still three weeks out.

Suzy
The room seats 500. It's at the Cocoa Beach Country Club in Cocoa Beach.  This event is free. It's open to anyone. So we encourage people to come and listen to our panelists. You can go on Eventbrite and find us there. There will be a question and answer session following that, so you'd be able to ask questions to our experts.  We'll have a lot of print resources that you can pick up and take with you, take home and come fully informed about this.

Jen
That is great. You went through something so sad and tragic, and you are using that to help so many other people and so soon after your son passed. Where do you get your strength?

Suzy
I go back to the signs that I get from Tristan. He's really strong with the force. I get little signs from him all the time. Yesterday, I was in my plant beds, picking out the weeds, and it was really hot and humid, and this gentle breeze just kicked up. He was on my mind so much. He's never far from my mind at any time. I was  thinking about him and that trip that we didn't get to take. He just blew that simple, gentle breeze right across, and it was almost like a little kiss on my cheek. I looked up at the sky and I said, thank you. I see you. Thank you for that.  I take those little signs as encouragement to keep going. That's where I draw my strength.

Jen
You're an amazing mom. Thank you. You're nonprofit, the Blue Plaid Society, how can people support that?

Suzy
We do have a donate button on all of our platforms. You can make your tax free donation, and we do send you a letter to have  for your taxes. We sell t shirts,  pins and little wristbands. We try to provide those products so people can use it for their own advocacy, and at the same time to bring a little funding to us. It does help because we do go out in the community with our big blue tent and all of our resources and things available, and  we connect in the community.  It takes a little bit of money to put on these types of events to bring the community together and to have things that they can take home with them. Every single cent  we bring in goes 100% to our advocacy. Our volunteers do not take any money. Everything we do, we do pro bono for Blue Plaid and for the community. Nobody takes a salary or anything like that.

Jen
Where would you like to see a Blue Plaid Society grow? Where do you see your nonprofit in five years?

Suzy
Well, the honest answer is, I hope in five years we are no longer needed. I hope that in five years, the Blue Plaid  Society, as well as the other nonprofits that are working so hard across the nation to help suppress the demand for these drugs, hopefully we'll get to the point where we suppress the demand that it's no longer needed. But if that doesn't happen, what I would like is definitely for us to grow in our own backyard. I'd like to become a household name. I'd like to be associated with Fentanyl awareness. I'd love for everybody to have a blue plaid day and wear blue plaid to their work or their church or their school, because I'd like for Blue Plaid to become the symbol for poisoning awareness.  I would also like to grow in the state of Florida. I like to be able to speak my story and  provide awareness and education to other communities in Florida.  I'd like to continue my work nationally. Through our website, we're able to reach people all over the country, and I hear from people all over the country every day, even from Canada, which is really cool. I just want to keep doing my advocacy where anybody will let me.

Jen
Absolutely. That's  how I feel as well. Thank you for allowing me and trusting me to share your story today.
Jen
Thank you so much for being my guest, Susie.

Suzy
Thank you. I appreciate it.