

PORT ORANGE SOUTH DAYTONA PONCE INLET DAYTONA BEACH SHORES

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Straight Up SolGier fights to help sexual abuse victims

By Dotti Bernhard
For Hometown News

The young, towheaded little boy with the freckles on his nose peeks out from a number of brochures and flyers.

He obviously was not even a preteen when the picture was taken. If he had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes, he might be mistaken for a child actor or model for an upscale children's clothing brand. Instead his demeanor

is bleak and his eyes vacant, like the photos we've seen of children his age in war ravaged countries.

It must be heart rending for his parents to look at this snapshot of their only son but they do just that day after day. For the past five years Mike and Victoria McGuirk have worked endlessly, running an organization that strives to help others escape what their son Matt endured until he

died at the age of 31.

Matt was a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of a trusted teacher as a child and suffered from its aftermath well into adulthood when he succumbed to an accidental drug overdose trying to self medicate his pain away.

The Straight Up SolGier Foundation was a goal he was never able to attain during his lifetime, but his parents have carried on in his behalf.

The physical, behavioral, emotional and mental devastation resulting from sexual abuse is well known among professionals in the criminal justice system and affiliated advocate communities. Victims are three times more likely to suffer from depression, six times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol, 26 times more likely to abuse drugs, and four times more likely to contemplate suicide.

It is difficult, for many impossible, to move on with their lives without proper counseling and support. Overwhelmingly, however, these victims either have no insurance, cannot afford the deductibles on the insurance they have, or their insurance does not cover the length of

time they need to make progress in a treatment program. Victims' aid programs, which are offered through the courts are out of step with victim needs.

Straight Up SolGier Foundation's main purpose is to help these sexual abuse victims survive what happened to them whether it was recent or a long time ago by providing the funds for free professional



Photo by Dotti Bernhard

Victoria and Mike McGuirk, who manage The Straight Up SolGier Foundation in memory of their son Matt, have gathered more than \$23,000 of valuable goods and services for their upcoming fundraiser, but are hoping for more.

counseling. It has been doing so since 2012.

A victim's age has no bearing on obtaining this assistance, the organization reports sustaining victims as young as five and as old as 71. With the somewhat recent closing of the local Children's Advocacy Center, requests for help from the Straight Up SolGier increased 44 percent in a year. By all measures, sexual abuse is an epidemic here if not everywhere and maintaining appropriate funds to meet that level of need is at crisis level too.

The Straight Up SolGier Foundation continues to be run 100 percent by volunteers (mainly the McGuirks) and all funds are used to raise additional funds or paid directly to a counseling firm for victim sessions. In order to continue the work, though, more is needed.

"We are getting up in years and it's difficult to continue putting in the hours needed to keep everything going," Mr. McGuirk said. "It's time to seek help."

So, the non-profit has filed for a grant from the federal government for "The Victims of Crime Act for Florida." They will not hear if they are awarded funds until November. In the meantime, Straight Up SolGiers' fourth annual fundraiser is will be Saturday, Nov. 5, at Down the Hatch in

Ponce Inlet.

Ms. McGuirk wants everyone to know that if they don't get the grant relief they are seeking from the government all money raised will continue as usual to be used as direct payment to victim counselors until the money runs out.

"Either way, people will get as much help as possible from us," she said.

This year's fundraiser promises to be fun. There is more than \$23,000 worth of silent auction and raffle prizes, including two Jet Blue round trip tickets, five local hotel getaways, one Orlando hotel getaway with local attraction tickets, one Port Canaveral get away weekend with four VIP tickets to the Space Center, two pairs of Costa Del Mar and two pairs of Michael Kors sunglasses, a three-hour limousine ride (perfect for New Year's Eve), one and three month memberships to Gold's Gym and a \$250 gift certificate from David Waller Interiors.

The organization is still accepting donations of merchandise or services, gift certificates and checks.

Tickets to the dinner are \$25. "It's one of the hottest tickets in town," according to Ms. McGuirk.

For more information or to donate, call (386) 212-7691 or visit straightupsolgier.org.

This was article from last year 2016, it was a great informative article and stated we would no longer be doing any more BIG fundraisers. Amy France as a Board member was determined to do a main fundraiser for us all by herself. Which she did on August 22nd & made \$32,300 for us!