

Katherine Grace Babak was born on August 28th, 1997. She was a cute little baby that became a beautiful, young 16 year-old with a big heart and a perpetual smile. Katherine was on the school golf team, was an active member in her church youth group, and she was the most wanted babysitter in her town, the little ones just loved her! But Kat was no saint, no she was a typical rambunctious teenager who struggled to get good grades in school, struggled within her faith, she fought with her sisters and was, as just about any teenage girl is, just a little boy crazy! But Katherine was just starting to turn it around and really get her life together when, on August 3rd of this year she was killed in a head-on collision that left her two teenage passengers in critical condition and the young man in the other car in serious condition, facing serious consequences.

I remember waking up early that morning, after a restless sleep and seeing my cell phone lit up. I glanced at it with sleepy eyes and saw a blurb of a text that said "Katherine was killed"...I thought to myself: that can't be right, what is going on? So I clicked on it and read "there's been a terrible accident and Katherine was killed". I think I let out a soft wail and woke up my husband to let him know his dear cousin, at 16, was dead. How do you tell someone that kind of news???

At first, not knowing the details, we thought: "was she drinking?", "was she texting", she must've been distracted. What else would've caused such a horrific accident? But answers came much later...

First, we had to attend her vigil, and then her wake and finally her funeral. It was just awful! The grim look on everyone's face, the endless parade of over 1500 people at her wake, many of them high schoolers sobbing in disbelief. Her golf team filing in in their uniforms...awful..and her poor parents. Her parents were a wreck, it was their worst nightmare! I just can't imagine , they will never be the same. But why did this happen? The answers finally came. The young man who was the driver of the other car who crossed over into Katherine's lane...Well he was high as a kite on crystal meth and also had heroin in his possession. The police commented to the family that they didn't know how he even walked out to the car, let alone drove it down that dark country road at 10:30 that night.

I saw a picture of that young man that took Katherine's life and what really surprised me was that he looked perfectly "normal". He looked like anyone's brother, like anyone's boyfriend, like anyone's son. Not at all like the kind of kid that gets high and then gets behind the wheel and recklessly takes the life of a beautiful young girl with her whole life ahead of her. I'm sure that was not his intention, that's not what he set out to do that night, but it happened. It happened and her loved ones are left here to grieve. Our lives will never be the same. His life will never be the same. The girls in that car that night will never be the same. All because of drugs.

I'm here to tell you tonight that I don't want anyone in our schools, or anyone in our community or in our families to go through this. I've experienced the fallout of how one bad decision causes a tidal wave of grief and sadness and regret. Please talk to your kids about drugs. Please help your loved ones with addictions. Don't wait for something like this to happen to you. Thank you for letting me share my story.