



ERIK'S CAUSE

*Kids like Erik are dying every week –
YOU CAN HELP!*

“Help Stop the Choking Game”

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2016 HIGHLIGHTS

Another exciting year! A special thanks to those who have generously donated. Your dollars allow us to travel to conferences, teach in communities, and stem the tide of this deadly activity. It is heartbreaking that kids still die from this senseless and preventable "game." We continue our dialogue in the press and at conferences, as well as working with schools and communities to integrate awareness.

We invite your help to continue our efforts:

Please consider us among your charitable causes ... share our efforts with family and friends.

Tax-Deductible Donations of any amount are appreciated and can be made at

www.erikscause.org/donate

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Your ideas are as vital as financial support.

Please send suggestions via return email or to erikscause@gmail.com

As I look back at 2016, two things propel me forward:

1. The expanding public credibility that (i) this really is an epidemic affecting our kids and (ii) that our program is impressive, viable and works!
2. Unsolicited feedback from parents in Iron County, Utah -- kids have been starting productive conversations with them as a result of our program being taught in their Health classes ... which is an outcome we've been aiming towards!!

Important Gains toward Credibility ... seemingly small but giant baby steps:

- **Evidence-Based Research Published:** The UC Davis Medical Center study concluded that our educational program both increased awareness of the dangers and decreased student participation in playing pass out games. (See *Journal of Nursing and Health Sciences*, June 2016, goo.gl/uHCzOY) While this is a small study, it is a giant step formally demonstrating the efficacy of our program.
- **Activity Injury Code:** The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) added an activity code to ICD-10-CM for medical personnel to formally record the choking game as a reason for injury. Formal designation means there is now a data point that can be tracked.
- **CDC Proposal to the WHO for a Death Code:** We recently learned that the NCHS also submitted a proposal to the World Health Organization (WHO) to include choking game as a code in the ICD-10, and that this proposal is being considered. The WHO designates all death codes. If ultimately approved, there will finally be a formal way to track choking game deaths as opposed to the current method that places them in either "accident" or "undetermined."

To me, the above indicates that some public entities recognize that this "game" is not a minor, passing fad but a serious issue worthy of data collection and analysis ... which will hopefully translate into further study for prevention efforts and roll-out of prevention in schools! We know it will take time ... but these are huge steps.

Two Big Trips this Year!

- Brazil (Fortaleza): The Instituto Dimi Cuida hosted its 2nd International Colloquium to approximately 500 attendees over two days who participated in a variety of forums for Educators, Law Enforcement, Medical Providers and Parents. Detective Mike Bleak, his wife, Amy Bleak, RN, and I were among the presenters. We are partnering with the Instituto to use our educational program in Brazilian schools. The Instituto is also working with the government in Brazil to block "how to play" videos from the internet. Kudos to their continued trajectory and success!!!
- South Carolina (York and Calhoun Counties): Following two choking game deaths between June and August, the York County Coroner, in conjunction with the Rock Hill School District, sponsored a well-publicized panel to educate the public from the perspectives of medical, parent/survivors, community and education for about 150 attendees. In addition to participating on the panel, the following day I trained 18 school resource officers who are now equipped to teach our program to students across York county. Additionally, an SRO from Calhoun County (who attended the panel program) reached out to me and I trained him so he can teach our program in Calhoun County schools. When they are ready to move forward with trainings, they will also collect pre and post training survey data.

More 2016 Highlights ...

- 3rd Year Strong in Iron County (Utah)'s 5th, 7th and 10th Grade Health Classes: Our program continues successfully and parents are sharing - unsolicited - that their kids are starting productive conversations after they've had the training in school! Survey data is currently under analysis and we hope to have it soon to share.
- Amazing Data: If you haven't already, check out our maps and data at http://www.erikscause.org/maps_data
- Alice High School, Alice, Texas: Dani Greenup, our Fundraising Director, was invited by a teacher at her former high school to present the Erik's Cause program to two high school Health classes. They were very successful and she was invited to do more this Spring.
- Lincoln Middle School, Santa Monica, CA: Stephanie Small, LMFT and I participated on a panel for Lincoln's PTSA focusing on teen emotional health. While not a full presentation of our program, we incorporated critical parts of our program and fielded numerous questions in the Q&A portion of the program. Approximately 30 parents were in attendance.
- CA Safe Schools Conference: We had a vendor table at the CA Safe Schools Conference and reached several hundred educators.

2017 Plans in Process Thusfar:

- SCASRO Conference: I have been invited to speak at the 2017 South Carolina Association of School Resource Officers scheduled in June 2017 in Myrtle Beach, SC.
- NASRO Conference: We are submitting a workshop proposal to speak at the 2017 National Association of School Resource Officers, scheduled for July in Washington DC.
- Vignettes in a Book Submission: David Anderson asked us to submit two vignettes for his new book: *Health and Safety Communication - A Practical Guide Forward*. Our topics are the evolution of Erik's Cause and using data to gain support. Release date is coming soon.
- Instituto Dimi Cuida: We are excited to continue our partnership so our wonderful partnership!
- Iron County, Utah: We are developing additional material for our program and hope to add other districts in Utah as well.
- South Carolina: We will continue to work with York and Calhoun County SROs to help them roll out the program as their respective schools permit.
- Texas: We hope to expand on Dani Greenup's success in Alice High School.
- Continued Collaboration with LACOE: We remain a resource for the Los Angeles County of Education and look forward to do follow-up trainings in 2017 to share our progress with educators across Los Angeles County.
- Proposal for Effectiveness Study: We continue to seek either a grant to fund or partnership in a multi-year study of our curriculum. As with other risk prevention curricula, such studies increase credibility and promote acceptance of integrating training into school curricula.
- Conference Attendance: In addition to SCASRO and NASRO, are exploring other conferences to attend that will help strategically spread awareness. These efforts depend upon available funding for travel.

A special thanks to those who have generously donated. Your dollars allow us to travel to conferences, teach in communities, and stem the tide of this deadly activity. I am heartbroken that kids still die from this senseless activity which is preventable through education. Our efforts are making a difference and we will continue to work with schools and communities to increase and integrate awareness.

On a personal note, it is hard to believe that I am entering my 7th year without Erik. This journey allows me to find meaning from his untimely death. I am inspired by others who have joined our fight. I remain grateful for your continued support and welcome both your donations and ideas for future growth.

Wishing you and your loved ones a peaceful and safe 2017. Happy Holidays! ❤️ Judy