

Testimony of William Ceravola

My name is William Ceravola. I was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. had a normal childhood. Early on I knew I wanted to get into law enforcement. started working at a pizza shop when I was around 15 years old. Around that time, I started to associate with some co-workers that would help sneak me into a local bar and get me drinks. I also was introduced to marijuana. I talked to a relative that was a high-ranking trooper with the Louisiana State Police. He advised me the best thing I could do to become a police officer one day would be go into the military. From that moment on I had a goal and knew doing illegal drugs was not the path I wanted to take. I joined the US Army in 1986 and loved serving until 1992. In 1995 I was hired by the Kenner Louisiana Police department. When I graduated from the police academy, I felt like I was going to change the world. Of course, I started out on patrol. I was later promoted to crime scene investigator. I would investigate all types of crimes from a vehicle break up to a triple homicide/kidnapping. It was my job to collect evidence at death scene and I would regularly attend autopsies at the morgue. I had to collect any evidence the pathologist would discover. None of these cases ever seemed to really affect me until one day I showed up and there was a pregnant female there. I learned that day they also examine the fetus, I'll never forget that little boy that never had a chance at life. It turns out that his mother overdosed. I know there is

a stigma with overdose deaths that it was their own fault, and it happens to other people or they've had a poor upbringing. It can't happen to smart, well-educated, wealthy people, right? Well, the female that day was a nurse that worked in hospital. Think about that for a second. How can that be? Well, I've also seen police officers that get addicted too. I personally had to dismiss an officer that got addicted to pain killers from a off duty injury. I wonder why he didn't just come to me and say he had a problem. Well, it's because no one wants to be labeled. I have also heard of police officers that are exposed at scenes, and someone administered Narcan to save his/her life. I've been told that it could take only one time using some highly addictive narcotics to get addicted. I worry those officers will now be haunted with an addiction.

My police career in Louisiana was a very busy one. Sometimes I wonder how I can sleep at night. In December 2000 I decided that it would be best to move and raise children in the East Berlin, PA area. I started with the Reading Township Police Department in 2002. Reading Township is a farming community just outside of East Berlin in Adams County. We have around 6000 residents. When I started with Reading Township Police Department, I was a police officer and when the chief of police left the department, they selected me to be the officer in charge. When I first started here, I remember hearing about a drug overdose in

the county weekly. At that time we had no Narcan or any other tools at our disposal. We would do our best on the scene with CPR until medics arrived. Sadly many, if not most, didn't survive.

In April 2004 I had a life altering event in my life. My youngest brother Byron took his life. This weighed heavily on my mother who already had a drinking problem and a failing marriage to her second husband. Sadly, one of my other brothers turned to illegally taking pills to cope with our brother's passing. Later he started using shooting up and eventually started using heron. I knew my mother would never survive losing another son. I saw my mom struggle to assist him and I was so mad she would give him money and provided him a place to live where he used drugs in her home. He would steal from her, it was like she was living as a prisoner in her own home. She said I can't stand to think of my son shooting up drugs under a bridge someplace in New Orleans and dying. After going through rehab 3 times, it seems as if he has finally figured out how to keep that monkey off his back. He has an excellent job with health benefits and a take home vehicle. I never thought I would see the day. He doesn't think so but I'm very happy for his accomplishments. I still worry what will happen when mom passes away. I sure hope that's not going to be a triggering event for him. I hope that he will be able to buy moms house when that day comes.

Over the last 10 years I can honestly say that I don't see as many overdoses as I did 10-20 years ago. I believe that educating the public and getting Narcan into the community has been a great success. I pray that we can build on this success and save more lives. I can attest that we're not just saving the users' lives. We are changing the lives of some that aren't even born yet. I still wonder what that little boy would be today if someone in the hospital had found his mother and saved them.