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BY TONY KUSHNER DIRECTED BY JOEL ROSTER



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It Can Happen in Lamorinda

Panel discussion on prescription drug abuse planned March 12

By Nick Marnell

D'Anne Burwell noticed her son's slipping grades, his weight loss. But when his best friend told her that her son had a problem, the news shattered the dream life Burwell had imagined for her family. She finally confronted her 19-year-old over his OxyContin addiction.

"I paid for rehab," said Burwell. "But paying for rehab was enabling him. I told him that he needed to find recovery on his own." You cannot hurry a person who is in denial, she said, and after a year of failed rehab attempts, her son called home from Colorado and agreed to enter a detox facility.

"Part of my recovery is breaking my silence," said Burwell, an educator, who wrote the book "Saving Jake: When Addiction Hits Home" to raise awareness of the prescription drug abuse epidemic. She and fellow Bay Area author Erin Marie Daly, who wrote "Generation Rx: A Story of Dope, Death, and America's Opiate Crisis," will share their stories of pain and recovery from the scourge of prescription drug abuse March 12 at a free conference in Lafayette.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 44 people die every day from an overdose of prescription painkillers, and many more become addicted.

Burwell said that her son, nearly four years clean and sober and close to finishing his college degree, was proud of the book and of his mother's decision to speak out.

Though the Burwell family story is on course for a happy ending, such was not the case for the Daly family.

Daly's brother took prescription painkillers in high school, and she said the one that stuck was OxyContin. From that drug, her brother progressed to heroin and he passed away from an overdose while away at college in San Diego in 2009. Daly, a freelance journalist, said she pieced the story together after her brother's death. "My brother was a very private person," she said. "Some have a predilection to addiction. But environmental factors contribute as well. Prescription painkillers are so readily available that anybody can become addicted. This could happen to my daughter one day."

Daly said that her goal is not only to educate people on the risks of prescription drugs, which she does through her blog Oxy Watchdog, but also to stress that compassion is essential for those who are addicted. "Nobody wants to hear this message," she said. "It's our dirty little secret."

In addition to Daly and Burwell, Jaime Rich, coordinator of the Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition, will appear at the Lafayette conference. "Don't think that prescription drug abuse can't touch you, that this is not a



D'Anne Burwell



Erin Marie Daly

Photos provided

problem in your community," said Rich. "It can happen in Lamorinda."

"An Afternoon with Authors: Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness" is scheduled from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, March 12 at the Lafayette Library Learning Center. For information, call (925) 385-2280.

Domestic Violence Survivor Uses Meditation to Build a New Life

By Sophie Braccini

Mojgan Kaviani greets her visitors with warmth and grace before inviting them to sit in her living room where tea will be served, along with the pastries she made herself. Far away from her native Iran, Kaviani has reconstructed a life for herself and her two children, part pastry chef and part meditation instructor. She says it is meditation that gave her the strength to leave an abusive marriage. She now shares her knowledge locally and with women seeking refuge in shelters.

Twenty-two years ago, as Kaviani lived within the confines of her unhappy marriage, a friend of her family invited her to meet someone who might be able to help her. Kaviani had no idea of who that person was or what was going to happen, she just trusted her friend. "I was invited to sit down by this man from India," she recalls. "He said I'm giving you a tool to get to know yourself, how you use it is your own choice."

Kaviani never asked his name and never saw him again. That person taught her transcendental meditation.

"He gave me a mantra," she says. "It is something that has a specific vibration, just for you to start the journey inside and detach yourself from the outside. It does not necessarily have a meaning. I don't know how he came up with this mantra, but it does not matter. Because it started changing me from inside."

Gradually Kaviani stopped looking for everybody's approval. "I was using the combination of praying, visualization, imagination and using my mantra; that's what my meditation was made of." She believes the process gave her the strength to leave her husband and her country, with her children, and venture to the United States.

Kaviani started working at the Bank of the West in Orinda then held different jobs, but when she went to visit one of her nieces, who is a baker living in Paris, she started her pastry



Mojgan Kaviani in her home

Photo Sophie Braccini

training. Family and friends began asking for more of her sweet creations. "I love it," she says. "It's like another form of meditation for me." She holds a cottage license for her company, From Moj With Love, and she sells her products through Facebook.

Then another opportunity presented itself, one she believes was a miracle. A year and a half ago, as she was planning to attend another class in France, Kaviani received an email from the Deepak Chopra Center telling her that she had been ran-

domly selected to spend a week there. "I felt this was the place where I belonged," she says. "I owe everything to meditation, and this place was calling my name." When staff at the center heard her story, they offered her a scholarship to become a certified Primordial Sound Meditation instructor. It was arduous study, with a lot of reading, analyzing, writing and presenting, but she succeeded. "I was married at 18 and never studied, and suddenly I was becoming something," she says.

... continued on page B4

Assembly Bill to Fund Support for Domestic Violence Victims

Assemblywoman Catharine Baker of District 16, which covers Lamorinda, is supporting legislation that funds programs for victims of domestic violence. Assembly Bill 1399, which allows an individual to designate on his or her tax return that a specified amount in excess of his or her tax liability be transferred to the California Domestic Violence Fund, was passed by the state Assembly at the end of January. The Assemblywoman says that domestic violence can happen everywhere, but that programs helping victims of domestic violence have faced a significant funding shortfall in recent years. "I'm thankful my colleagues in the Assembly agree that action must be taken," she said. AB 1399 now goes to the state Senate for consideration.