

TEARS ON INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY



RESPECTS Campaigner at rally



POIGNANT Families of victims



TOUCHING Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar at event

On behalf of The Joshi Project.

We are honoured to have these words spoken today on behalf of Joshi Smith, our beautiful and brilliant daughter, who was tragically taken from us last year. It is through her inspiration and in her name that we are fighting for changes to a health system that did not care enough to save her.

Joshi should be here today fighting beside us, because she knew, as all of us here today know, we can no longer tolerate a system that is incapable of keeping our children, sisters, brothers and loved ones safe and alive.

This must change. People don't wake up one morning and just decide to become addicts.

There is always a road that leads them there.

Despite decades of scientific research, the clear and obvious connection between trauma, mental health and drug and alcohol addiction has never really found its way into public health policy or treatment.

This simple understanding is where change must begin, so that

when our children and loved ones are at their most vulnerable, they can be helped and treated with dignity, compassion and without judgment, and their lives can be saved. Our hearts go out to every one of you.

Today our hearts beat as one as we demand change."

Cath, Mark and Ethan Smith



EMOTIONAL Peter breaks down in tears giving tribute to Joshi, far left



You never get used to stories like these and you never should

Campaigner breaks down at rally giving tribute to drug death victim

CAMPAIGNER Peter Krykant broke down in tears as he read a tribute to a drug death victim during a highly charged rally at Holyrood.

Peter, who has battled addiction and launched the UK's first unofficial Overdose Prevention Centre, was overcome as he addressed an audience of MSPs and families affected by drugs.

He had been asked to relate the story of 24-year-old Joshi Smith,

BY MARK MCGIVERN
from Stirling – who died of an overdose while living in America last year – as part of a commemoration for International Overdose Awareness day outside Holyrood.

Her parents, Cath and Mark Smith, have formed a charity, The Joshi Project, to campaign for better mental health services. Joshi's parents believe her life could have been saved if she'd had access to the right kind of support.

Peter said: "I hadn't read the tribute to Joshi in advance and I guess I was just overcome when the words hit me.

"It's a story that has become all too common, a young life that ends for entirely prevent-

able reasons and leaves a family and network of friends in turmoil.

"You never get used to stories like these and you never should. We need to change Scotland so that stories like this are not just a fact of life."

Peter was aided by Scottish Greens MSP Gillian Mackay, who completed the poignant reading.

Other speakers at the event included MSPs who have been highly vocal on Scotland's drugs issues, like Monica Lennon, Paul Sweeney and Alex Cole-Hamilton.

Scotland's drugs policy minister Angela Constance also took time to give condolences for those affected by

drug deaths. Peter, who drove his yellow OPC ambulance to Holyrood for the day, had invited attendees on board to demonstrate how easy it is to set such facilities up.

He said: "Today was a chance for us to remember those lost to drugs and to stimulate discussion on better drugs policies.

"It was also a chance to get people on board the bus to see that it's a relatively easy facility to set up.

"I firmly believe we will soon be seeing facilities like this in Scotland."

The event also included a wreath-laying ceremony to remember those who had died as a result of an overdose.

