

Voice of the Victims

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Cathy's Prom

NEW PROGRAM SEEKS TO SAVE LIVES BY TYING DRUG-FREE PROM PLEDGE TO REAL-LIFE TRAGEDY

- **Campaign commemorates Cathy Isford, who died after taking Ecstasy at senior Prom**

ORANGE COUNTY, CA (April 12, 2004) – Cathy Isford always wanted to teach, and as the second anniversary of the Orange County, Calif., teenager's death from prom-night drug-taking approaches, her dreams have finally become reality. Cathy's Prom, a nationwide safe prom program, is encouraging kids to enjoy this year's prom "without taking drugs or making destructive choices."

Isford was one of more than 30 students known to take Ecstasy at the 2002 Senior Prom at Tustin, California's Foothill High School. A few hours after ingesting the popular designer drug, she fell into a coma. Two days later, she was removed from life support equipment and died. She was buried in her white, flowing prom dress, a silk scarf covering the autopsy scar on her chest.

"The no-drug-use pledges students are forced to sign aren't good drug deterrents because there isn't an emotional, true story behind them. Cathy's life was close to theirs, so they can relate to her death and be really moved to not do drugs at their prom," said Cathy's Prom founder Beth Pearce, who told Isford's story in her film, *Voice of the Victims: True Stories of Ecstasy & Ketamine*. "If Cathy had survived Ecstasy, she would be leading a campaign like the one we are starting in her honor."

Visitors to the Cathy's Prom Web site, www.CathysProm.com, can sign Cathy's Pledge, which states,

"Cathy, I promise to do all I can to make sure prom isn't my last party, or my friends' last party. I will have fun (I know you'd want me to!) and I

will enjoy my prom experience without drugs or other destructive choices, so I can wake up the next morning to celebrate a new day."

The site was designed by Star Isford, Cathy's sister. The site also lets students e-mail their pledge to the Isfords, and forward the pledge to their friends. It also has special sections for teachers with a study guide for introducing students to the risks of designer drugs, for prom committees with art and promotional ideas to support the program, tips for parents, and a wealth of information on Ecstasy, Ketamine and GHB, three popular and highly dangerous designer drugs.

"We're hoping Cathy's Prom will spread through the Internet like a healthy, life-saving virus," said Paul Isford, Cathy's father. "We would like to see thousands of kids take the pledge this year, and continue to grow each year. We are heartened that Beth is honoring Cathy's memory in a way that Cathy would have liked very much."

Isford said his daughter gave up all drugs for two years before deciding to take Ecstasy one last time to celebrate her Senior Prom.

Cathy's story is one of four told on Voice of the Victims: True Stories of Ecstasy & Ketamine. Also featured are the stories of Erin Rose, who survived a Ketamine-induced coma with permanent brain damage; Sara Aeschlemann, who died a slow, painful death after a young man who put Ecstasy in her water because he wanted to rape her; and Steven Lorenz, who died when a dealer substituted PMA for Ecstasy.

The films – in young adult and parent versions – also include "chapters" that provide a wealth of information on the long- and short-term effects and risks of the drugs, how to protect loved ones, signs of drug use and much more. The films are available at www.VoiceOfTheVictims.com.

Note to Editors: For reproduction quality photos of Pearce and Isford and copies of Cathy's Prom materials, visit www.CathysProm.com and click on "media."

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