

Check out the feature sections on center spread about the history on the upcoming winter holidays.



# The Portfolio

What's inside

News.....	1 and 4
Editorial.....	2
Opinion.....	3
Entertainment.....	5
Features.....	6 and 7
Sports and Clubs.....	8 and 9
Arts and Academics.....	10 and 11
Technology.....	12

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## N.O.P.E. teaches youth through real life presentations

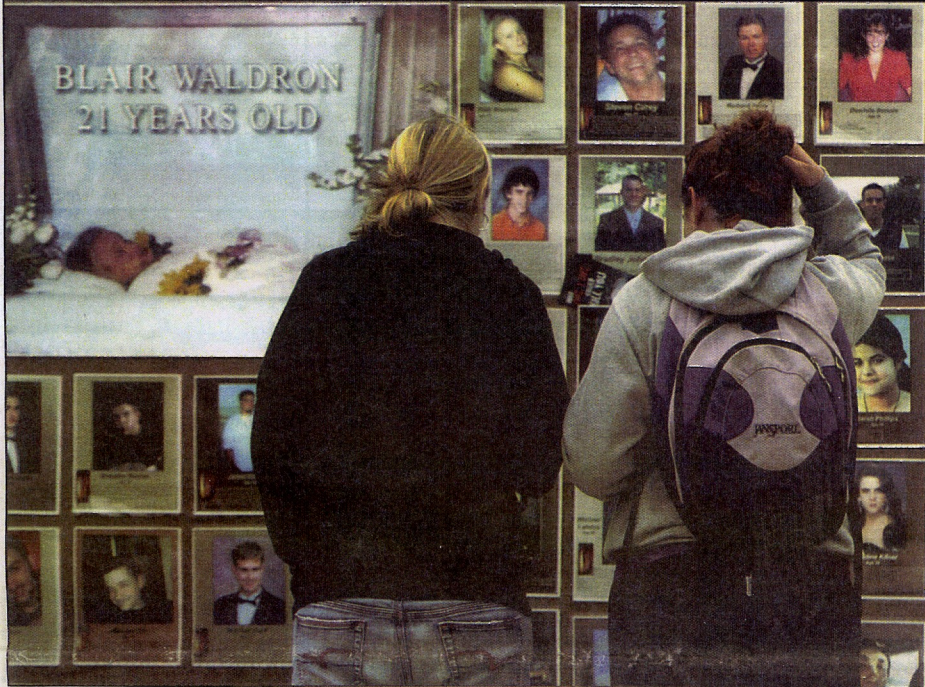


Photo by Chris Matula/The Palm Beach Post

Students study a memorial wall of young adults who suffered drug-related deaths. Students who signed a pledge to abstain from alcohol or drugs received a free t-shirt. The wall was sponsored by the Narcotics Overdose Prevention and Education (NOPE) Task Force.

By Josie Russo  
Editor in Chief

Only one sound was heard at the beginning of Narcotic Overdose Prevention and Education (NOPE) assembly. The rhythmic beating of a heart echoed as names and faces flashed across the screen. They had all died of overdoses and none were over 30.

"Our kids are dead. They are never coming back," Susan Chappell, whose son Bradley Johnson died of a narcotic overdose, said.

The NOPE task force is "a group of community leaders

and concerned parents working to save lives through dramatic personal presentations about the deadly consequences of drug abuse,"

NOPE task forces have been founded in Florida, California, and Indiana. The Palm Beach county chapter of NOPE was founded in 2004 by Richard and Karen Perry after their son, Rich, died of an overdose.

NOPE's biggest achievement is the multimedia presentation, which is delivered to middle and high school

students.

According to nopetaskforce.org, the NOPE presentations are purposefully blunt and evoke powerful emotions. The response from students, parents and teachers has been very positive. Many students seek guidance after the presentation for themselves or to get help for their friends.

NOPE first became involved with the school four years ago.

"We knew that middle schools were allowing [the task force] to come and talk to their students, so we decided that we needed to inform our students as well," Cynthia Hender-

son, eighth grade assistant principal, said "We figured eighth grade is a good time to inform students of the harmful use of drugs and alcohol."

NOPE's main goal is to make students and parents aware of what can happen if prescription drugs are misused and how the use can not only hurt the user, but the user's friends and family.

"I have been the with the chaplain at two in the morning knocking on the parent's door, trying to wake them up

to let them know their son or daughter is laying dead in a medical examiner's office," Captain Jeffery Lindskoog, a NOPE task force director, said.

The presenters use real life stories and props to make their point. One of those props is a body bag.

"The sound of that zipper closing as the medical examiner closes that body bag around their child is the most

haunting noise a parent can hear," Lindskoog said.

The presentations can become very emotional; councilors are present in case a student needs to be removed. It can also be very emotional for the presenters.

"I was not there to hold his hand the day he died," Karen Perry tearfully said, "No one was, and that breaks my heart."

NOPE includes statistics about alcohol use and drug overdoses to add further shock to their presentations.

According to nopetaskforce.org, there are approximately 24,000 annual fatal, unintentional drug poisonings in the United States and everyday 2,500 teens in the United States try prescription drugs to get high for the first time.

One story was about 13 year old Colby Crutchfield. Crutchfield had a friend whose father died of cancer; he had some strong painkillers to help him till the end. Crutchfield and his friends decided to try some to see what the effects would be.

His mother found him dead in his bedroom the next morning. Crutchfield had died of a prescription drug overdose. His friend suffered from kidney failure and was hospitalized, but lived.

NOPE's overall message to students is that only one try can kill the user and their family is also hurt.

"The hole in my heart is still as big as it was on that day," Chappell said, "I suspect it always will be."



Photo by Bruce R. Bennett/The Palm Beach Post

NOPE is a group of community leaders and concerned parents working to save lives through personal presentations about the deadly consequences of drug abuse.