



The Blue Plaid Society
www.blueplaid.org

**FENTANYL DEATH
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • PREVENTION**

Nothing you have ever experienced can prepare you for the loss of a child. This kind of loss is like no other, and the loss of an only child renders entry to the most uncommon group of survivors in the world. On November 4, 2021, Suzy Pereira entered this association upon opening her son's bedroom door to wake him up for work, as was her routine. Tristan was a hard sleeper, and it appeared as though he fell out of his desk chair and passed out cold, likely from a mixture of beer and anxiety medication. But Tristan wasn't asleep at all; he was dead, and when she turned him over and saw his purple-dotted face, a trickle of blood ran from his nose, and the last of his breath exhaled from his body, so many emotions electrified her at once, shock, panic, disbelief, worry, and sadness. She thought maybe he could be saved if she moved quickly, but that was not the case because, unlike any time before, Tristan had obtained a drug laced with fentanyl.

In the months to follow, Suzy, like so many other bereaved parents, would learn that fentanyl has been killing young Americans for years, and there were few reports on the news and little being done about it. She felt strongly that many other parents like her were struggling with their children through substance use and not knowing that one pill, one line, one shot, one time could kill them. Why didn't anyone familiar with her struggles warn her? Why didn't the recovery center he had just emerged from one month earlier warn her? How could we shut down the entire country for a public health issue, and no one was talking about this public health issue?

And so only a few short months after his death, a mother from Florida who lost her only child at age 26 founded The Blue Plaid Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and educating the public about the fentanyl poisoning crisis across the country. Every parent, child, and young adult needs to know the illicit drug landscape has changed, so the message must change. It's no longer don't do drugs because you can get addicted or overdose; it's don't do drugs because you can be lethally poisoned at any point from the first time to recreational to active use. The message must be you can make one mistake and never wake up.

Blue Plaid is based in Central Florida. The skull and crossbones logo was chosen as the universal symbol for poison and supports the organization's ideology that all fentanyl deaths are poisonings, not overdoses, as there is no safe dosage of this chemical. Additionally, Blue Plaid's name is in honor of Tristan, well known in his community for his iconic style of wearing blue plaid shirts.

In its first year, Blue Plaid exceeded its goal of connecting with the public and raising awareness. The team developed a thriving social media community, organized and hosted the first-ever Central Florida Fentanyl Summit bringing together experts from the federal government, law enforcement, and the medical field, and developed and presented an in-depth online training class for treatment and recovery professionals. The society supports other advocate parents through its angel programs, sharing materials and offering free graphic design work for digital and print media. By the end of the year, The Blue Plaid Society widened its community services to include prevention and became a Narcan distributor through the ISAVEFL program. Narcan distribution events are fully underway, bringing this life-saving medication to anyone, especially those in vulnerable communities.

When drunk driving became an unacceptable problem, a national effort was born from a group of mad mothers. The time has come again! In 2023, Blue Plaid hopes to continue to expand its reach, working towards the ultimate goal of mass communication and education about fentanyl poisoning to all.