



Cole Smoot was a typical 16-year-old sophomore at Tecumseh High School in New Carlisle, Ohio. He was extremely bright and enrolled in honors classes. He liked to "skate by" doing the least little bit required to still maintain his spot on the honor roll. He was a wrestler who was in love with his sport, and an active member of the Junior Air Force Reserve Officer Training Cadet (ROTC) program for two years. He was a great friend to many, an amazing older brother, and a loving son.

Cole was an adventurous child who was continually in search of the next big adventure. While some of his more creative feats landed him in the emergency room, they all led to lasting memories that evoke a smile when retold. He had a spunk and zest for life that was evident in the twinkle in his eyes and the impish grin continually plastered on his face. His personality was larger than his 5'4" body could contain.

On February 12, 2011, Cole decided to join his friends in what would be his last adventure. That evening Cole, for the first and last time, decided to take prescription drugs that were not his. When he displayed symptoms of drug ingestion, his parents took him to the emergency room where he was tested, evaluated, and released. A few short hours later, Cole was found dead in his bed. He had stopped breathing sometime during the night. Cole took methadone, and just one pill killed him. One bad decision ended his life.

Cole was not alone though in this adventure. The friend who gave him the pill also made a bad decision. While many say he is lucky when compared to Cole, he has a much more difficult road to travel. He has to live with the knowledge of his role in Cole's death. He has to live with a lifetime of regret and "what ifs." His future is still before him, but it is a much different one than previously imagined.

The story does not end there. What about the friends that knew Cole had the prescription pills? As

many as twenty teens knew the drugs were in the school and being distributed the day before they got into Cole's hands. Many of his own friends knew Cole had them. Not one person told a trusted adult who could have easily prevented this tragedy. They are the victims of being an "innocent bystander" who thought someone else should tell someone. Many have since confessed to being afraid of losing his friendship, but little did they know their loss would be so much more than they ever dreamed. Innocence was lost that night. A friend was lost that night. A community became heartbroken, and a family is shattered.

What Cole and his friends did not know is that legal prescription drugs can be more deadly than illegal ones. There is a misconception that since a doctor prescribes the pills, they must be safe. Not only are prescription drugs deadly, they are prolific. They can be found in almost every medicine cabinet, in most homes, and are rapidly ending up in the hands of too many teens.

Cole thought he was bullet proof. He thought he was immune from the dangers and consequences of taking drugs. This tragedy all comes down to one bad choice, one bad decision.

Cole does not have to live with the fallout of his choice. His friends and family do. Cole does not have to face a future with the knowledge of the high price that was paid due to his bad decision and everyone's silence.

One bad decision with drugs can end a life!

See more of Cole at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8ZUGLbRvnQ>.