

“Walking After Midnight”

Reflection on the ORNAA Provincial Conference
Submitted by Patricia Chrystian RN, BScN, CPN(C)

It's nearly the end of October, and the Provincial Conference was upon us once again. In Red Deer, again. I am so tired of being in Red Deer, and at the Capri Hotel, again. Oh well, as a former planning committee member, I see both the pros and cons of holding this wonderful educational event in a central area. However, if we held it in my city once every five years, I could get a break on the hotel and travel costs. Enough complaining about the venue and location!

I am always impressed at the program chair's ability year after year to organize a well rounded educational program. There is always something for everybody and always one or two topics that are not related to nursing. My favorite session this year was “Walking After Midnight” by Katy Hutchison. Hers is a personal story of murder, justice and forgiveness. I will try to tell her story.

Katy began her presentation with pictures of a young man, Bob McIntosh. She told his life story and talked about his many sporting accomplishments. They got married and had twins. They lived in the small BC town of Squamish.

On New Year's Eve in 1997, Bob McIntosh was murdered while trying to break up a teenager's party at a friend's house. The parents of this teen were away in Mexico, celebrating their recent marriage. Bob had called to check on Jamie, once he found the party was taking place. Bob did not feel comfortable with the lack of adult supervision. After trying to speak to Jamie with three separate phone calls, he left to check on the party. He took two other men with him. They got separated. He was initially punched by Ryan McMillan, who rendered Bob unconscious. Ryan Aldridge then kicked him four times. Bob died at the hospital with a fatal brain hemorrhage. Refusing to be a victim, she moved away from the town of Squamish, BC. She moved forward in a positive way and built a new life with her son Sam and daughter Emma. In the midst of her grief, and with remarkable courage and grace, Katy began an amazing journey of forgiveness.

Katy recognized the need to educate teens about the risks arising from the combination of youth, alcohol and lack of supervision. She began

speaking to schools and other groups about social responsibility, restorative justice and the transformative power of forgiveness.

Katy waited for five years while the police uncovered and convicted Bob's killers. Ryan Aldridge was charged with Bob's murder in 2002. Astoundingly, Katy reached out to Ryan, and they have since forged a powerful and unique relationship.

Through a concept of restorative justice, Katy and Ryan work together. Restorative justice operates on the belief that conflict, even criminal conflict, inflicts harm. Communities are empowered to choose their response to conflict. Restorative justice views conflict as an opportunity for a community to learn and grow. Restorative justice believes that the individual must accept responsibility for repairing that harm. Victims, offenders and the community actively participate in devising mutually beneficial solutions and implementing them.

Ryan has now joined Katy in her speaking engagements, and Katy supported his recent successful appeal for early parole. Ryan and Katy speak about bullying, social responsibility around alcohol and other drugs and violence and moving forward after an unspeakable loss.

One of the key points of Katy and Ryan's talk is synergy. Synergy is defined as the combined or cooperative action of force. The whole synergy of a crowd is greater than the sum of the individual people and parties can often get out of control quickly---negative synergy

Katy and Ryan also speak about having "Safe Parties". Some of these points may seem like "common sense", but I feel kids and parents need to hear them more than once. They include:

- ◆ Invite people that you want to attend
- ◆ Do not put the invitation on the internet
- ◆ Ask friends to back you up at the door when uninvited guests arrive, call the police
- ◆ Have a plan in place to make sure your friends get home safely
- ◆ Stick with your friends, and trust your gut instinct---use a buddy system.
- ◆ Do not allow guests to come and go.
- ◆ Do not make drinking the focus of the party---do not allow drinking contests

I chose to summarize this presentation because it is an incredible story of forgiveness, something not many of us would think we could even do. Katy was very inspiring and I thought that we all could use a little reminding

on how to keep kids safe. I truly enjoyed this non nursing presentation of the conference. I have read her book, it is a great book!

Hoping to see all of my wonderful peri operative nursing colleagues next year! I wonder what the Thursday night theme will be?