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SECOND PLACE, GRADES 9-12: Saving a life justifies testing

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Hundreds of mourners gathered around his burial plot. Tears streamed down their grief-stricken faces. The horror and injustice of his death was almost palpable. Frankie wasn't supposed to die at 17. He played three varsity sports, made National Honor Society and had an adorable girlfriend. His parents loved him deeply. His teachers saw him as a role-model student.

Junior year was great. Even the constant studying, testing and college searching wasn't too bad. But Frankie had a secret. Even his closest friends weren't aware of his newfound relationship.

He met his newest friend at a house party. Frankie never bothered with the beer or weed available at most of the parties. He had a lot of good things going in his life and didn't want to mess anything up. Besides, his girlfriend would never have approved of any type of illegal substances. So when he swallowed that little pill, he did so without much thought. The name intrigued him. Ecstasy. The feeling was incredible. He became fearless, vulnerable, calm and charged-up all at once. He loved it, and so he began his secret relationship with that little pink pill.

Oddly, or maybe not so oddly, his friends never suspected a thing. At parties, he seemed sweaty and thirsty, but so did everyone. His grades were still good, and he was captain of his school's basketball team. His girlfriend still adored him, and his parents trusted him.

Of course, no one knew what was really happening at Jerry's party that fateful night. Frankie was suddenly really sick. His body temperature soared. When the paramedics arrived, there was nothing they could do. He had literally burned up inside. There was no way to reduce his body temperature. There was no antidote for Ecstasy. His friends beat themselves up for not realizing that Frankie needed help. His girlfriend was dumbfounded. How did she not see what he was doing? His parents were beyond being upset and feeling guilty. Why didn't he reach out for help? Why hadn't anyone figured it out?

Now it was too late. No one could help him. Another life had been cut tragically short. If mandatory drug testing for all high school students saves one life, it is worthwhile and necessary.