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Only on 12: Mother of burned meth lab suspect speaks out about drugs

A Hephzibah mother is speaking out after a meth lab explosion nearly killed her son.

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HEPHZIBAH, Ga.---A Hephzibah mother is speaking out after a meth lab explosion nearly killed her son.

It happened on August 18th at a home on the 1500 block of Pine Ridge Drive. Fire crews responded to a structure fire, but when they arrived, they realized it started from a meth lab explosion.

Investigators say there were actually two active labs in the house. Animal control also took several dogs and a goat from the home.

Weeks later, Danny Accord is still in critical condition after that explosion, with burns on most of his body. His mother, Barbara Gross, says he may not survive.

Now Barbara is speaking out against the drugs that have landed her son in a hospital bed.

Barbara says her son Danny loved life, adored his three children, and cared for animals--until meth took over his life. Her home is filled with pictures. Some are easier to look at than others.

"To be perfectly honest, when the phone rang and it was MCG, I thought they were calling me to tell me they had found him dead somewhere and they needed me to come identify the body," said Barbara.

It's the phone call where Barbara found out her 36-year-old son Danny Accord was critically injured in a meth lab explosion at a friend's house.

"As far as I know, he's blind in both his eyes and he could still lose his arm, he could still lose his ears," said Barbara.

"It's every month we're starting to deal with this problem more and more," said Richmond County Narcotics Lieutenant Robert Partain. "That was actually the first explosion of that size we've ever seen before of a meth lab."



"Just since meth took over, it's like it just stole his soul. I mean he wasn't the same at all," said Barbara.

The pictures tell the story. In Danny's picture before he was addicted to meth, he's seen smiling with his children. Now, flash forward a few years to a mug shot. Barbara says that loving father is long gone.

"The Danny that everybody knew and loved is dead. Meth has just consumed him. It took him and it turned him into someone none of us know," said Barbara.

Even if her son lives through the burns that cover his body, Barbara says he'll never be the same. "It's a death sentence. From the first time, it's a death sentence. It steals you. It steals the person and leaves you with a shell," she said.

"Don't do it...don't do it," says a commercial meant to keep people from trying meth. The Georgia Meth Project commercials may be graphic, but for Barbara there are no actors for her family; meth is a harsh reality.

"I really don't think they know what they're doing to themselves, because meth attacks the part of the brain that makes you feel emotions," Barbara said.

"(The commercials are) pretty accurate," said Lt. Partain. "I mean, that is what meth does to you, and destroys lives. We've seen it time and time again."

"Meth... quit or die. That's your choice," Barbara said. "There's nothing in between."

Barbara wanted to tell her son's story in the hopes it stops someone else from going through the same pain.

Danny is still in critical condition. They say he's got about a 50/50 shot of making it.

Criminal drug charges could be on the way for Danny, but narcotics investigators and the district attorney are looking into it. Once he's charged, remember, taxpayers start picking up his medical costs, if he makes it.

Investigators have also identified several others who they say were there the night of the explosion, so more arrests are likely.

If you or someone you know is battling addiction, there are several places people can go for help. One is the link below. It offers hot-line numbers, treatment centers and places you can get help in the Augusta and Aiken area.

In Hephzibah, Berean Baptist Church has a Reformers Unanimous meeting every Friday at 7:00 pm at their church on Highway 88.

