
SUPPORT OF KRATOM ORDINANCE 251028

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Kevin's Story: A Cautionary Truth About Kratom

My name is Juliana Shriver. I'm writing you today as a concerned mother who has experienced a devastating loss.

My son, Kevin, 31 years of age, was taken from us on December 1, 2025. He leaves behind a 2-year-old daughter. He was one of the kindest people you could ever meet. He was the kind of person who would give you the shirt off his back, help a stranger without hesitation, and show up when others walked away. **He loved deeply.**

Because he wanted to feel okay inside, for more than ten years, Kevin struggled with alcohol and substance use. Some substances were illegal. Others were legal. Like many who battle anxiety, depression, and physical pain, Kevin was searching for relief, something that would quiet his mind, ease his body, and allow him to function.

What we did not know and what we could not have known was that Kevin had begun using kratom.

We discovered his kratom use just five days before his death.

Kratom is legal and widely sold, often marketed as a natural supplement and a safer alternative to alcohol or prescription medication. Because it is legal and easily accessible, many people, including Kevin, believe it must be safe. There were no obvious warning signs that pointed directly to kratom, and its use can easily go unnoticed, even by those closest to the person using it.

For Kevin, kratom was a coping mechanism for anxiety, depression, and physical pain. It was not something he viewed as dangerous. It was not something he believed required secrecy or intervention. Like many, he trusted its legal status and availability.

One of the most alarming realities we learned is that kratom does not appear on standard toxicology or drug screens. Kevin's toxicology screen was clean. Without specific testing, kratom use can go undetected, creating a false sense of reassurance for families and even medical professionals.

As with many substances, dependency can quietly develop, and with dependency comes tolerance. Over time, higher and higher doses are often needed to achieve the same effect. What once seemed to help can gradually require more frequent or increased use, raising the risk of serious physical harm, often without the person fully realizing what is happening.

Kevin was also an alcoholic, and alcoholism alone can cause severe liver damage over time. But medical professionals told us that an alcoholic's liver, while it can fail, does not typically deteriorate in the way Kevin's did. His liver had broken down to what was described as having a "ground beef" appearance; damage that went beyond what is normally seen with alcohol alone.

What makes kratom especially dangerous is how quietly it can take hold. There may be no dramatic changes, no immediate crisis, and no clear red flags, until there are. In Kevin's case, by the time we understood what we were dealing with, there was very little time left.

This story is not about blame. It is about awareness.

Legal does not mean safe. Natural does not mean harmless. And substances that are easy to obtain, difficult to detect, and socially minimized can still carry serious, even fatal, risks.

Kevin was more than his struggles. He was loving, generous, funny, and deeply human. He fought for years to overcome his demons, and he deserved accurate information, medical transparency, and stronger safeguards than he received.

We share Kevin's story so others might ask better questions, recognize hidden dangers, and seek help sooner, before there are only days left to understand what is happening.

I cannot bring my son back, but I can fight to protect other families from experiencing this same heartbreak. I respectfully ask you to vote in favor of banning kratom and to prioritize the safety of our residents over access to a substance that has proven harmful and deceptive.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and for considering the lives affected by this decision.

Respectfully,
Juliana Shriver