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## 'God, PLEASE HELP ME,' Great Kills man wrote in journal before suspected Red Robin OD

by MIRA WASSEF

The sound of sirens and a sinking feeling were signs something was eerily wrong.

About two weeks ago, a Great Kills woman dropped her son, Jonathan, off at the Staten Island Mall, not knowing that would be the last time she would ever see him.

The woman, who requested her name not be used, said she kept texting him to find out where he was and if he had a ride home.

When she didn't hear from him, she frantically walked around the mall.

Then she went outside and heard sirens.

"I got a sinking feeling," the mom told the Advance. "I knew something was wrong. But I didn't think it was that wrong."

Shortly after, Jonathan, 27, was found unconscious in the bathroom at Red Robin on Sept. 9., the family said. There was drug paraphernalia near him and emergency personnel had administered four doses of Narcan, the anti-overdose spray, they said.

He was pronounced dead at Staten Island University Hospital. The family suspects it was an overdose, but is awaiting the official autopsy report.

"We were so close," the mom said. "It was just me and him."

Hundreds of miles away, Jonathan's brother, Christopher, 31, and sister-in-law were in their Virginia home looking at a homemade picture Jonathan had made him -- a glittery piece that read "27 years of brotherhood."

A half hour later, the phone rang.

"I had a hard time standing," said Christopher, who asked the family's last name not be used. "My knees were shaking. I was in shock."

"I didn't know it was a problem."

### HIDING HIS ADDICTION

He wasn't emaciated, didn't have sunken eyes or track marks. He was a friendly, 350-pound man who appeared happy in groups, but in despair when he was alone.

Jonathan, the family said, was a well-liked guy who was friendly and outgoing. He would help strangers with any task, from walking them home to shoveling their driveway.

"He was sensitive. He took things to heart," Chris said. "Everybody liked him."

Jonathan's family said he hid addiction very well, and only realized the depths of his addiction from a journal he kept outlining his fears and struggles.

According to his loved ones, Jonathan started experimenting with drugs about six years ago because he was bored and it was readily available. But it wasn't until January 2015 that he admitted to his mom that he had a problem and he was scared, Chris said.

He went to detox and even stayed with his brother in Virginia for a while, and was doing well before he relapsed less than two months later.

Then Chris gave him an ultimatum. He told Jonathan he would never let him see his daughter, knowing how much his brother loved his then unborn niece.

That threat motivated Jonathan to go to a long-term facility in Florida in February 2015. But after three weeks, he wanted to come home.

“He came back to Staten Island and was good for like 50 days,” Chris said. “He was going to meetings and then he stopped. Then he went to a party and did it.”

In his journal, Jonathan said, “Trying to get clean is a brand new experience for me. I’ve never actually wanted to get clean before until I finally realized it wasn’t just for fun anymore and it wasn’t only affecting me. It affects everyone around me as well. When I finally realized all these things and decided I need help I asked for it and my family was more than willing to help.

“The only way I think I can do it is with the help of God. God, PLEASE HELP ME! I want to be better and I want to live my life for you so I can be with you in heaven. PLEASE HELP ME!”

“He had huge faith in God, I never knew about his faith,” the brother said. “That was comforting to see. I truly believe he’s in heaven.”

### **‘YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND’**

The journal entries, the family says, were a series of revelations into Jonathan’s addiction and his faith.

For instance, he wrote about disappointing his family, especially his mother, and the self-loathing he would describe after doing drugs.

In the journal, Jonathan reveals that he started experimenting with drugs when he was 18. First, he started drinking and then experimenting with various drugs in college, including marijuana, pills, ecstasy and cocaine. The pill progression went from Vicodin, Xanax until he was introduced to oxy.

He said he didn’t know the trigger that sent him on this path, but he acknowledges he did it because he was bored and his life had become monotonous.

In a February 2015 entry, he writes:

“It went from a weekend thing to a 3 day a week thing only at night and eventually to an everyday thing. It started only as 1 pill a day with a blunt to get a nice high going. As the weeks went on with every usage so did my tolerance. Now it was 2 pills a day, 1 in the morning and 1 at night. After this was the realization that if I didn’t do my daily dosage of pills I would start to get sick. Eventually everybody I hung out with was taking these things so they were literally everywhere.

“I really do want to live a healthy happy and normal life without drugs. I just hope God gives me the strength and will to see it through not only for myself but for my family as well. I pray I can get through this and then never let them down again. It would be a great feeling to know that I can be trusted again.”

In July, Chris said his brother’s life was on a downward spiral. Jonathan only started doing heroin in the past few months, Chris said. The family begged him to get help, but couldn’t get through to him.

About two weeks before he died, Jonathan feared for his life when he wrote the following entry on Aug. 26:

“I am very angry right now. My life is on a downward spiral and I don’t know how to fix it. Well truth is that I know how to fix it but I am either too lazy or afraid to do it. I need to get my life together ASAP or I’m going to end up in jail or worse dead!”