



SafeLaunch Promotes the One Choice Initiative

Preventing the theft of childhood, and often life, by substance use and addiction through education and awareness, beginning with the very young

Utilizing the skills of a Navy-trained pilot, an artist, and a pure white airplane for a canvas, SafeLaunch encourages families at aviation events across the country to experience the thrill of flying while learning about young people’s elevated risk of acquiring substance use disorder and how to prevent the disease. Having flown over 5000 hours, SafeLaunch cofounder CDR Ron Cuff tells young people, “Having a great life is like a great flight. In order to fly safely you need to set your sights on a destination, have a backup plan, be well trained, and keep your head clear”.

Likewise, [One Choice](#) is a clear and simple message. Because the adolescent brain is actively and rapidly developing until about age 25, it is particularly vulnerable to the effects of substance use. The earlier substance use begins, and the heavier the use, the more likely a person will develop addiction, also known as substance use disorder or SUD. Preventing all substance use by teens reduces the risk of contracting addiction as adults. SafeLaunch encourages teens to make the solemn commitment *not to use alcohol or other intoxicating drugs before age 21 for health*.

One Choice
No use of any alcohol, nicotine, marijuana or other drugs before age 21 for health

In February 2020, SafeLaunch completed its [48th Flight Above Addiction](#) in [Buckeye, Arizona](#). On day one of the two-day event, co-founders CDR Cuff and Janet Rowse, spoke with 150 fifth and six grade students about how their brains develop. Students learned the importance of keeping their brain safe from drugs in any form, and most importantly they *pledged* to each other that they would not use alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other drugs until age 21, if ever. Then, to memorialize their commitment, they *signed* their names on the aircraft’s pure white fuselage.

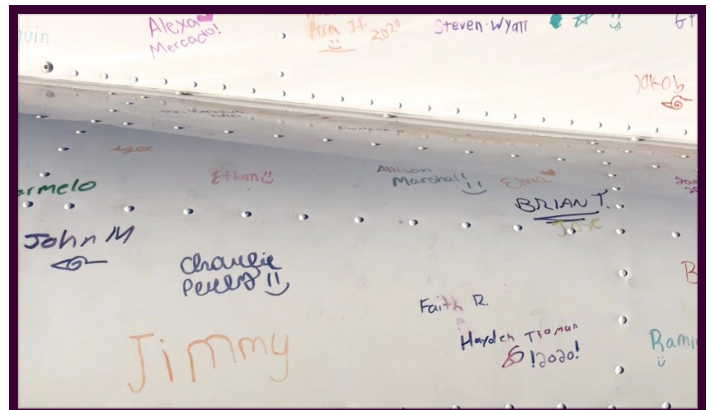
I pledge to...

- Set realistic goals and fly straight to them.
- Choose responsible, caring adults to guide me.
- Not allow anyone to bully or abuse me.
- Remember that *anyone who offers me alcohol or drugs is not my friend.*

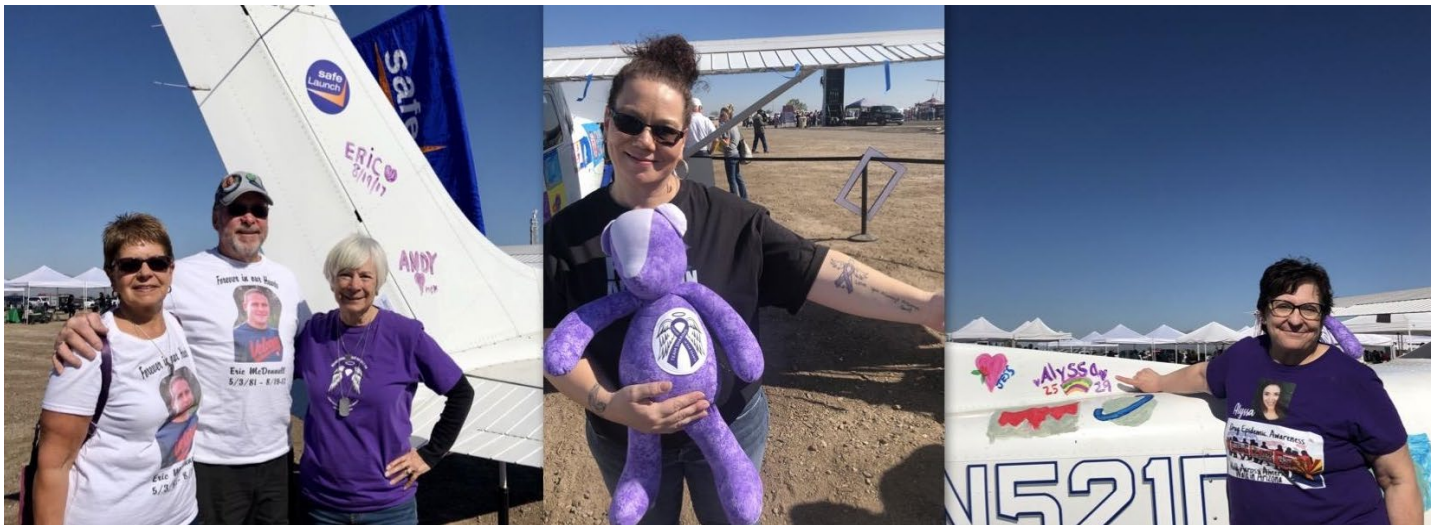
I promise not to experiment with alcohol, nicotine, or marijuana until age 21.

Name

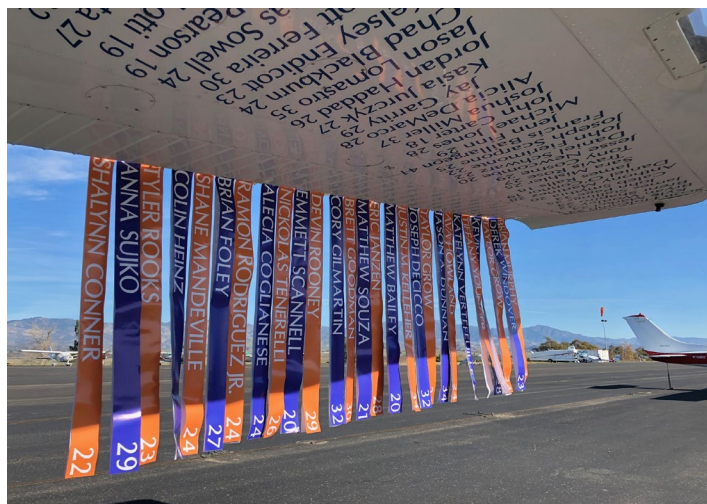
Witness



On day two, children from the public at large were invited to paint their dreams of flight on the fuselage while parents who have lost children to substance use disorder painted their loved one's names on the tail of the airplane. All of this occurred near the names of 240 young people who lost their lives to drugs and are memorialized beneath the wings. The short, young lives displayed beneath the wings underscore the fact that the disease of addiction can happen to anyone. Janet Rowse explained that the [Wind Beneath Our Wings](#) memorial and the families left behind are what drives her passion saying, "Addiction is a 100% preventable disease that begins in childhood 90% of the time. I believe that when people understand the science of this cruel brain disease, they will unite to not just treat it, but more wisely, *prevent* it."



The parents joining SafeLaunch had just completed the [Drug Epidemic Awareness Walk Across America](#) in downtown Buckeye.



This year, SafeLaunch launched the National Prevention Association. Members of the association consist of concerned parents, nonprofit organizations, and forward-looking businesses who want to be part of the solution

to the drug epidemic that is killing almost 200 Americans each and every day. Members recognize that we cannot treat or punish our way out of this crisis, or by focusing on any particular drug. The National Prevention Association is uniting individuals and groups around the concept of [primary prevention](#) through **advocacy and education**.

The association's advocacy efforts focus on the following strategies: First, the inclusion of annual brain science programs in K-12 public schools. Awareness of brain development and its reward system, in particular, is essential for behavioral health. Second, voluntary confidential screening programs have proven to be a valuable tool in substance abuse prevention and in reduction of pressure within peer groups. Next, are efforts to engage lawmakers to increase the enforcement of existing laws for providing intoxicants to minors, including an increase in penalties for violations of these covenants. Finally, our children should be free to learn in a completely drug-free environment. Truly drug-free schools would not only maintain campuses as healthy sanctuaries, but include faculty and staff as essential elements of the developing minds and consciousness of students. Teachers are often as influential as parents and should take that responsibility to heart.

Education encompasses informing communities, families and schools about brain development and the One Choice initiative. We strongly encourage all schools and caring adults to rethink the outdated notion that drug experimentation is just a "choice" that an under-developed brain is capable of making, and to recognize that this is indeed a national epidemic, deserving of all the concern and alarm of any other medical crisis. All intoxicants, including alcohol, are potential gateways to a lifelong disease that frequently results in severed relationships, poverty, relational abuse, crime, homelessness and death. The 21st century motto to protect all young people from a preventable disease and possible death is the One Choice initiative: *No use of any alcohol, nicotine, marijuana or other drugs under age 21 for a healthy future.*

SafeLaunch is a 501c3 organization founded in 2010. Join their prevention effort at www.safelaunch.org. Contact them at info@safelaunch.org.