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## Planting dreams at a grassroots level

*Organization promotes awareness of carbon monoxide*

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La PORTE — In November of 2010, La Porte native Lindsey O'Brien Kesling went to sleep in her Scottsdale, Ariz., apartment, and never woke up.

A 22-year-old recent college graduate, she had accidentally left her car running in the garage and died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

In her honor, and to prevent future deaths, her mother, Dot, established the Lindsey O'Brien Kesling Wishing Tree Foundation, and this Saturday the foundation will launch a carbon monoxide outreach campaign to spread awareness of the dangers of the poison and to impress upon community members the importance of purchasing detectors for this odorless, colorless gas.

Taking place in conjunction with the La Porte City Fire Department's open-house on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at station 1 in La Porte, the LOK Foundation's portion of the event will highlight carbon monoxide facts and statistics, and other resources to protect the home.

First Alert, a maker of carbon monoxide alarms, will provide 50 free detectors at the event and coupons for 20 percent off select purchases online. For every detector purchased online, the company will donate a detector, up to 150, to the foundation.

After the death of her daughter, Dot said people wanted her to sue. But she decided to take a different route. She learned that more than 20 states, including Indiana and Arizona, did not have requirements for carbon monoxide detectors at home. She wanted to change that.

"We thought instead of going directly to the legislature and decision makers," she said, "that we would start on a grassroots level to appeal to the hearts of the community to go out there and buy a \$25 carbon monoxide detector and we thought if we could campaign in cities across the state we could help the people, and get them to sign the petition and urge our legislatures to make a move."

The petition can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/LOKCOpetition>.

She said the campaign is starting in La Porte because it's Lindsey's hometown. Future events are being planned for Bloomington and Scottsdale. There will be seven events in the campaign.

But Dot noted that carbon monoxide awareness is only part of the foundation's mission. She said another part is encouraging children to live their dreams. To this end the organization's "Wishing



Celebrants gather at an event held by the LOK Wishing Tree Foundation where wishes, dreams and prayers are hung on a tri-color beech tree in La Porte. Submitted photo

Tree," based on a tree her daughter saw in Shakespeare's hometown in England, was planted in La Porte for children to hang pictures of their dreams.

"And we've gone in to the schools and talked to children about the process of dreaming and how it begins the process of goals," she said, "and then we take those dream and put it up on the tree and post it up on our Facebook."

She said this is all part of her group's Dream School Project, a program encouraging children to stay safe so their dreams can come true. She pointed out that her daughter was always someone to live out her dreams.

"Kids are so often inundated with technology and don't take the time to do what we did when we were little," she said, "like counting the clouds. We want them to take the time to think about what their dreams are and create a vision board. A big part of the foundation is this wishing tree. And we hope, as the foundation grows, to help facilitate a young dreamer's dream."

The organization plans for the carbon monoxide campaign to become an annual event.

She said the construction of her daughter's building in Scottsdale made it seem safer because her daughter didn't have to leave the garage to enter her apartment. But it actually made the place more dangerous.

"The garage was underneath her apartment," she said, "and the car was in the garage and she left it on accidentally when she was bringing things up to her apartment and never woke up."

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, unintentional carbon monoxide exposure accounted for an estimated 15,000 emergency department visits and 500 unintentional deaths in the United States each year. Between 1999 and 2004, an average of 439 persons died annually from unintentional, non-fire-related carbon monoxide poisoning, and the national average annual death rate was 1.5 per million persons.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, nausea, dizziness or confusion.

Carbon monoxide detector coupons can also be found online by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/LOKFirstAlert> on or before Nov. 30.

For more information, go to [lokwishingtree.org](http://lokwishingtree.org).

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