



Staff photos by Katina Zentz

Esther Baker, left, and Franklin "Butch" Dixon III of Brunswick remember their son, Franklin "Butch" Dixon IV, as they light a candle during the Grace Episcopal Church third observance of Overdose Awareness Day Tuesday in Brunswick. Guests gathered to remember loved ones and provide information on how to remove the stigma of substance abuse.

# RECOVERING TOGETHER

Brunswick church unites community for overdose awareness

By MARY GRACE KELLER  
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Franklin "Butch" Dixon III and Esther Baker recall their son as a talented artist.

With a pencil in hand, he sketched people, trucks and cartoons. He made people laugh and befriended them easily. He enjoyed trips to Florida, Ocean City and Hershey Park. He preferred pepperoni pizza from King's in Brunswick and loved his Chevy.

But he had his demons, too.

Franklin "Butch" Dixon IV was 32 years old when he died from a drug overdose at home in 2018. His father found him when he came to wake him for work at the family business.

"He had been fighting addiction for 12 years," his father said.

Heroin and, ultimately, fentanyl took ahold of his life.

"He struggled with it, but he did try to get clean many times," Baker said. He tried rehabilitation, she said, but "... that little demon on his shoulder, it won."

"Butchie," as his family called him, was one of the many people recognized at Grace Episcopal Church's third observance of International Overdose Awareness Day Tuesday night in Brunswick.

Overdose deaths rose to 93,000 last year in the U.S., a 29 percent in-



Senior warden of Grace Episcopal Church Kathy Brown speaks during the church's third observance of Overdose Awareness Day Tuesday in Brunswick. Guests gathered to remember loved ones and provide information on how to remove the stigma of substance abuse.

crease from the year prior, the Associated Press has reported.

Purple lights tied to the railing outside the church's red doors led visitors into the sanctuary where roughly four dozen people gathered in the name of hope, healing and education. Recovery Support Specialist Jenna Harrison offered resources from the Frederick County Health

Department, while local therapist Jamie Eaton detailed how nonprofit Second Street and Hope provides free grief therapy to parents via the Living Through Loss program. Brunswick Mayor Nathan Brown issued a proclamation for Overdose Awareness Day in the city.

(See OVERDOSE A4)





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Keynote Speaker and Executive Director of Rainbow of Love Recovery Foundation Carleah Phillips Summers speaks during the Grace Episcopal Church third observance of Overdose Awareness Day Tuesday in Brunswick. Guests gathered to remember loved ones and provide information on how to remove the stigma of substance abuse.

## Brunswick church unites community for overdose awareness

(OVERDOSE from A1)

Carleah Phillips Summers, executive director of Rainbow of Love Recovery Foundation, shared how her own experience with addiction motivated her to open Andrea's House, a transitional living facility for women and children affected by addiction.

"This disease is a vicious one," Phillips Summers said. "You are not alone."

As Phillips Summers recalled her early days of recovery when her son wasn't even a year old, she encouraged others to find power in their stories and share them.

"Recover out loud," Phillips Summers said. "There is no shame ... I recover out loud because lives depend on it."

Those affected by addiction were invited to share their testimonies before the crowd. They preached support and the desire to break down the stigma surrounding addiction. Members of the clergy lifted up prayers.

Kathy Brown, senior warden of the church, said the event started in 2018 after a tenant in the building the church owns next door asked the congregation to consider a small observance to honor their cousin who died of an overdose. The event grew and took place again in 2019.

"It's become a mission for the church to work with the recovery community," Kathy Brown said.

The evening marked Baker and Dixon's third time attending the observance. Though Butchie wasn't with them physically, Dixon carries a grinning portrait of his son on his forearm — his only tattoo. The parents want others affected by addiction to feel supported and encouraged to keep trying for a better life.

"Don't give up," Dixon said. "There is help out there, you just have to want to take it."

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