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This story reported on NBC's Dateline, is the story of the Forbes family and Carrick Forbes, a 19 year old heroin addict. It is the story of the struggle to overcome [addiction](#) and the reponse of the family to their daughter's addiction. It is a compelling story that gives insight in [young adult drug addiction](#) and the angst of the family and the parents. It also looks at the relationship of the sibling in the family.

Here is an excerpt from the story as reported on www.msnbc.com.

For years, Thom and Dierdre Forbes have been consumed by a desperate struggle to save their daughter's life: 19-year-old Carrick got started with drug addiction after she dropped out of high school.

Two summers ago, Carrick was living in a downtown New York apartment with her boyfriend, 40 minutes by train but a world away from her parents home in Hastings-on-Hudson, an affluent suburb of New York.

Her father, Thom Forbes and her mother, Deirdre, both 52, knew where their daughter was living. They knew she was an addict, but what they didn't know was how to stop her.

Over the next year, they would confront the ugly truth that their precious little girl had turned into a hardened junkie.

And in the year to come, they would grapple with a heart-wrenching dilemma: To save Carrick, they might have to turn their backs on her at her most vulnerable moment, even if it meant she might die in the process.

There was much at stake for this family. Besides Carrick, the Forbes have a teenage boy named Duncan, and they were worried he might go the same route as his sister.

Carrick visits home

It was a hot summer afternoon in 2003 when "Dateline" first met Carrick Forbes. She had recently come up with a way to make some money—she needed to get a job. But in order to get one, Carrick needed an ID card and she needed her mother to vouch for her identity at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

In mid-August, Carrick took the train from Manhattan to her parents home in Hastings.

Before Carrick arrived, Thom, who works at home as a freelance writer, took precautions and hid his money. He even urged his wife and son to do the same. It might seem shocking, but that had become routine for Thom. Carrick had repeatedly stolen money from her parents to buy drugs and he knew that she might try again when she stopped at home before her mother drove her to the DMV.

On that day, August 14th, the entire Northeast region plunged into a blackout.

The depths of her drug addiction were that day: Panic set in as she tried to figure out a way to get back to New York City where she knew she could buy heroin.

After a visit to the DMV, Deirdre drove Carrick back to their home in Hastings. Once there, she and Thom gently tried to explain

to
14-year-old Duncan why his sister seemed so agitated. "She'll be away from her fix," Thom explained.

By 6 p.m., Carrick had started to sweat and her breathing quickened — signaling the beginning of her body's withdrawal from heroin. The effects of the drug last just a few hours, so addicts have to take the drug several times a day. Otherwise, they get sick.

While Carrick paced around the house, Thom, Deirdre, and Duncan appeared calm. They had been through this so many times before. By the time "Dateline" met them, Carrick had been in a dozen detox clinics and rehabilitation centers.

In the months to come, their strategy would change. But on that day, her parents simply let her go, not knowing how dangerous the lifestyle she was returning to really was.

With the power out and no lights, Deirdre recorded her thoughts for the camera that night:

"Today was a typical day that we have with Carrick very often. Emotions get out of hand. Impulsiveness. Does this have anything to do with being dope-sick? She said "yes." I just wish she could see that she deserves a lot more."

The Forbes' past with alcohol, and how Carrick slowly became a junkie

Thom and Deirdre Forbes were both journalists when they met 30 years ago at the Daily News, a New York tabloid, where she became a photographer, he an editor. They shared a passion for news and for booze.

Deirdre and Thom continued to drink heavily when they got married in 1977, and Deirdre only scaled back only when she was pregnant with Carrick.

Carrick Forbes was born six weeks early in August 1984.

Deirdre continued to drink after Carrick was born. And so did Thom, but Thom remembers a pivotal day when baby Carrick was about a year old and she forced him to take stock of his own drinking. "Carrick was crying and she wanted my attention. And I felt I had to go out and get a bottle of vodka," recalls Thom. "And I remember her holding on to my leg and I'm saying, 'I'll be right back. I'll be right back, and we'll play.'"

He bought the vodka that time, but he stopped drinking that very week — a development Deirdre didn't like.

"It was real scary because he was my drinking buddy," says Deirdre. "But my real buddy was the booze."

About a year and a half later, with Thom's support, Deirdre gave up alcohol as well.

When the two of them did give up drinking, through sober eyes, they finally saw little girl Carrick. "Oh, she was beautiful, happy, entertaining, ingenious, creative, funny and a joy," says her mom. "She was always dancing and singing and getting on top of tables."

But when Carrick turned 5 years old and started school, her parents said all that life and energy seemed to drain out of her. School was crushing for Carrick as early as kindergarten.

The school suggested she had a learning disability, a condition that often contributes to feelings of low self-esteem. Experts say this can make children more at risk for trying drugs when they get older.

"She didn't quite fit in. She had problems cutting paper," says Thom.

Throughout elementary school and middle school, Carrick struggled to keep up. Her parents tried to get her help, enlisting special education tutors and psychologists — even changing schools, but nothing they did could keep Carrick interested in school. She felt like a failure.

"I think she struggled with trying to be part of the mainstream, yet feeling she couldn't be," says Deirdre. "And then eventually, she thought, 'Well, I can't be, so I'm not even going to try anymore.'"

By 7th grade, Carrick was cutting classes. Carrick began lying to her parents, piercing her body, and shoplifting — out of

control behavior that her parents could not stop.

Deirdre started to feel helpless, and those feelings grew into a full scale depression. Deirdre was hospitalized for three weeks. Thom split his time between caring for his wife who became suicidal, and trying to help a daughter who was spiraling down.

By the time Carrick was 13, the Forbes were convinced she was smoking marijuana, and to prove it, they took her to a doctor for a drug test.

"On the way to have the test done, she breaks down and says, 'Yes I did. I'm was smoking.'"

But that confession didn't stop Carrick from continuing to sneak drugs and alcohol into their house, the extent of which, the Forbes only pieced together later. Under their nose, Carrick and her friends were smoking pot, and drinking beer and wine.

In high school, Carrick continued to perform poorly and her drug use escalated to more and more potent drugs, a pattern experts say is typical. Deirdre even remembers getting stuck with a needle one day. "I went into her room one day to just talk to her. And she was sitting there and she shoved something under the bed, and I said, 'What'd did you just put under there?' 'Nothing,' she said. And somehow I just put my hand down on something and I got stuck. And that's when my heart kind of flipped."

Looking back, there were other clues that their daughter had a serious drug habit: Money was gone all the time. Carrick would take \$20 at a time from her parents' wallets and they wouldn't even know it.

But the hundreds they lost to Carrick's stealing was nothing compared to the tens of thousands of dollars they have spent sending her to rehabilitation programs.

When she goes in, the Forbes' hopes are raised — and then dashed again when she doesn't stay clean.

"But I'll tell you one thing about a rehab," says Thom. "You know she's safe. You know she's not getting high."

But after the programs, Carrick always turned back to drugs, causing her parents to long for more drastic measures.

"As a parent, you start praying the kid will get busted for something not too severe but enough that maybe they will be ordered to treatment or ordered to treatment in jail," says Deirdre. "It's about keeping them alive. And sometimes that's the best you can do for a while until they can reach the point where they want recovery for themselves."

But would Carrick ever want recovery for herself? It was her parent's greatest hope. But a month after we met her, Carrick showed no interest in getting help for her addiction to heroin. Her only interest was getting a job to pay for her habit."