



Georgeanne Koehler's Holiday Wish: 'NO MORE EMPTY CHAIRS AT CHRISTMAS'

This holiday season, Georgeanne Koehler, one of our members from the Pittsburgh area, will be facing an empty chair at the Christmas table, a chair that should be filled by her brother Billy. Billy Koehler died this past March when his heart defibrillator stopped working. Why? He couldn't afford to replace the battery and wasn't provided health insurance at work.

When Billy got laid off from his job as an electronics technician in 2003, he got work delivering pizzas, a position that offered no benefits. Despite the meager pay, he made too much to qualify for Medicaid. "They said he would probably qualify if he quit his job," said his sister, Ann Stanton, who lives in Beaver County.

Billy was well aware of his heart problems, having had his first heart attack at age 39. After he lost his job, no insurer would cover him based on his pre-existing condition except for one which refused to cover anything related to his heart arrhythmia. And his salary would simply not cover the \$10,000 surgical procedure needed to exchange the battery.

On March 7th, 2009, Billy finished his shift at the pizza shop and as he was driving home, his heart stopped. The battery in his defibrillator was too depleted to restart his heart, and he died.

"It's tragic that in this country, if you don't have money, you're not going to have health."

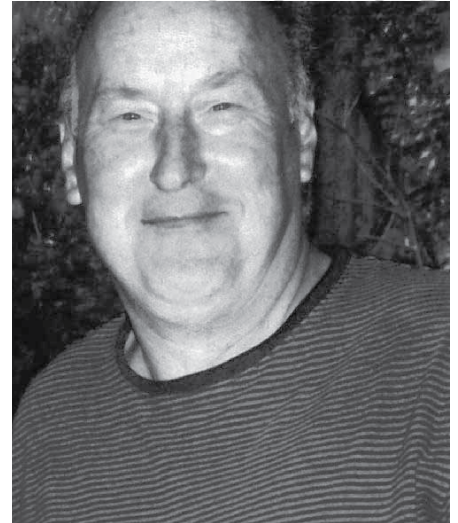
Since Billy's death, Georgeanne has been working tirelessly - on her own, through our union, and with other organizations to fight for healthcare reform. She recently attended a town hall forum with Senator Casey, and has done interviews with WTAE-TV (ABC), KQV (AM news radio), the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and Huffington Post. Recently she spoke at a press conference on Capitol Hill at the invitation of Senator Harry Reid's office.

Georgeanne created a campaign to collect postcards addressed to our representatives and President Obama asking for healthcare reform before the holiday season is over. On December 17th, Georgeanne delivered the over 500 postcards she collected to the White House with the message that millions of Americans just like Billy can't wait another year for healthcare reform.

You can still help!
Write your own holiday postcard for healthcare reform and send it to:

SEIU Healthcare PA
209 9th Street, 4th Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

We will make sure it gets to the White House before the end of the holidays.



Like millions of other Americans, Billy Koehler was offered no health insurance at work, couldn't afford it on his own, but made too much to qualify for Medicaid.



Georgeanne Koehler, joined by Kathy Shaner from Washington County Home and twenty other volunteers collected around 80 postcards during their recent canvass.

- Georgeanne Koehler



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