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BLOOD DRIVE IN MEMORY OF NICK PUZIO AND PUSH FOR “NICK’S LAW” TO BE PASSED IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE

(East Patchogue, NY) – NYS Senator Dean Murray, Assemblyman Doug Smith, Suffolk County Legislator Nick Caracappa, and Brookhaven Town Councilman Neil Manzella along with the New York Blood Center sponsored a Blood Drive in Honor of Nick Puzio on Saturday, September 9, 2023. The blood drive was a tremendous success yielding 92 units of blood which can potentially save 276 lives.

Nick Puzio, 25 of Farmingville, was struck and killed on March 12, 2023, by two separate hit and run drivers, while he was walking in a pedestrian crosswalk on Route 112 in Patchogue. While Nick was in the hospital fighting for his life, he received blood in an attempt to save his life. Unfortunately, his condition was grave, and his injuries were too severe, and he succumbed to his injuries. Nick has been described as an extremely loving and generous individual who would do anything for anyone. That is why his family and friends wanted to hold this blood drive in memory of Nick, feeling that his loving memory will be kept alive with every life that is saved.

Senator Murray, Assemblyman Smith, Legislator Caracappa and Councilman Manzella felt this was a fitting tribute to Nick, while spreading the importance of blood donation and the many lives it can save.

It was Nick’s story that led to the introduction of “Nick’s Law” (S. 6051/A. 6520) earlier this year by NYS Senator Dean Murray and NYS Assemblyman Doug Smith. The bill will increase penalties for those convicted of leaving the scene of an accident involving a death. Unfortunately, neither bill made it to the floor of either chamber for a full vote during this year’s session.

Which leads us to today. According to Suffolk County Police Department and articles from the Daily Voice, The Patch, and TRB News Media there were thirteen deaths from hit and runs in Suffolk County since the beginning of 2023. From January 1 through August 30 of this year, eight of the fatalities have been in the Town of Brookhaven. Five of the thirteen deaths have taken place in the month of August alone. There must be serious consequences for such actions. “Nick’s Law” will amend the vehicle and traffic law to increase the penalty and fines for hit and run crimes, from a Class D felony to a Class B felony when there is a death of a victim. It will also amend the criminal procedure law to provide that a hit and run accident resulting in the death of a victim, shall be class B felony crime for drivers of all ages.

“With the increase of hit and run accidents, “Nick’s Law” needs to be in place to serve as a deterrent for such reckless and cowardly choices made by these drivers. We need to do all we can to prevent such atrocities from happening. It is important for the public to get behind this measure and to contact their state representatives to let them know that this important legislation can save lives,” said **NYS Senator Dean Murray, 3rd Senate District**.

“We gathered today to honor the memory of Nick Puzio, a bright young man taken from us too soon. Nick received the precious gift of blood during his fight for survival, a testament to the life-saving potential within each of us. ‘Nick’s Law’, which I was honored to sponsor in the Assembly, seeks justice for those who flee the scene of a fatal accident. It aims to ensure that such heartless acts are met with significant consequences, with a minimum 10-15 years in jail. Let us come together in unity and remembrance, honoring Nick’s legacy and working towards a safer community for all,” said **NYS Assemblyman Doug Smith, 5th Assembly District**.

“I applaud Senator Murray and his colleagues for bringing forth this important piece of legislation in memoriam of Nick Puzio. We owe it to the victim’s families, loved ones, the residents of Suffolk County, and New York State to have strict measures in place to deter those from leaving the scene of an accident. Anyone leaving the scene of a hit and run accident, after due process, should and must face the fullest extent of the law,” said **Suffolk County Legislator Nick Caracappa, 4th Legislative District**.

Senator Anthony Palumbo, 1st Senate District said, “Puzio’s death is a terrible tragedy and a loss that might have been avoided had the drivers stopped to render him assistance. Nick’s Law is an important part of our legislative initiatives to make our roads safer by enacting harsher punishments for reckless driving, operating a motor vehicle under the influence, and now, for drivers who flee the scene of an accident.”

“People need to be held accountable for their actions. If either driver had stopped to help Nick, his life may have been saved. Increasing the penalty to a Class B felony will hopefully make drivers reconsider leaving the scene of an accident and save numerous lives,” said **NYS Senator Alexis Weik, 8th Senate District**.

“I applaud my colleagues Senator Dean Murray and Assemblyman Doug Smith for bringing forth legislation to punish individuals that leave a scene of an accident which causes a death. What happened to Nick Puzio was a travesty, and hopefully the bill proposed by Senator Murray and Assemblyman Smith will prevent people from leaving a crime scene and punish those who take a life and flee without regard for the well-being of others,” said **NYS Assemblyman Joseph DeStefano, 3rd Assembly District**.

“As a father of five, I know that receiving a phone call telling me a reckless driver committed a horrific act, taking the life of an innocent child, is something no parent should have to experience. There are no words to explain the pain the Puzio family continues to bear each day without their son in their lives. It is my pleasure to support the family and join many of my colleagues in honor of what would have been Nick’s 26th birthday. Together, we need to raise awareness of “Nick’s Law” so we can crack down on hit-and-run incidents to protect our loved ones from such atrocious acts,” said **Assemblyman Ed Flood, 4th Assembly District**.

“I wholeheartedly support the approval of Nick’s Law, S6051. Public safety is the most important duty of any governmental administration. We must hold those responsible for leaving an accident, with firm consequences,” said **Suffolk County Legislator Dominick Thorne, 7th Legislative District**.

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