

Family in marijuana-edibles murder speak out, Kristine Kirk shot and killed at Denver home

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DENVER - The family of a woman shot and killed allegedly by her husband who was high on marijuana edibles spoke out Tuesday about their cherished sister and daughter and the three sons she was raising.

Kristine Kirk was killed April 14. Her family said it still feels so raw.

"It has been four months since the most horrifying and still-inconceivable tragedy occurred in our family," they said Tuesday.

While they said Kris was, "brutally shot and killed by her husband in their home," they said very little about suspect Richard Kirk and the incident, instead focusing on how the family is doing now and who Kris was.

"Just a huge loss to us," Kris' mother Marti Kohnke said.

"Kris was the anchor in our family, she was a key role in each of our lives," Kris' sister Tammy Heman said. "She always stepped up and offered her help. She worked full time, she managed the boys' schedules, she was involved in every aspect of their lives."

"She helped us," Kohnke said.

"We don't know how she did everything she did," Heman said.

"She did it all," said Kris' father Wayne Kohnke.

Kris had three sons -- Ethan, Aiden, and Andrew.

"For the boys, the loss is immeasurable. They were extremely close to their Mom," Heman said. "She was their biggest fan whether at school, home or on the sports field. She was their 'go-to' person for everything. And they were her greatest pride and accomplishment in life. her close bond with them was something to envy and that can never be replaced."

Heman said the boys are loving, bright, funny and sensitive.

"They keep us going," Heman said.

Heman said, fortunately, she and her parents have been active in the boy's lives since they were born so there's already a comfort level between them.

"They've had a busy summer and have seen a lot of their friends, made new friends and returned to playing their sports," Heman said.

"We can't replace her," Heman said. "All we can do is love them as much as we can."

Marti Kohnke admitted it's been hard to go from just being a grandmother who spoiled the boys to also being a disciplinarian.

"As grandparents it was our job to spoil them, and they liked that," Kohnke said. "And now suddenly, we also have to discipline them. That's a bit of a change. Because now they can't have three cookies before dinner."

"The first time I said, 'no,' they had never heard it before, they didn't know it was part of my vocabulary," said Wayne Kohnke.

Marti Kohnke admits she did warn the boys that she's already raised three kids.

"I did tell the boys that there's not a lot they're going to get away with -- I've been there done, done that," Marti Kohnke said. "What's different for us is the technology. So now we have someone who can teach us how to program our smartphones."

"I don't have the energy I did at 30, but we bought a ping-pong table, so I could beat them at some sport," Marti Kohnke said. "I can't play football and jump on the trampoline. I can play ping-pong."

"Our whole priority has been on them," Heman said. "Trying to give them everything Kris wanted to give them."

"They don't ask a lot of questions," Wayne Kohnke said. "They know it hurts us. They are in counseling where they can talk to someone."

However, Marti said the boys wish they could hear their mother's voice again.

"The last sound that they heard was her -- that they'll ever hear -- was her scream," Marti Kohnke said in tears. "So it's difficult sometimes to talk about her, because it's still so very raw."

However, Kris' presence is still there in many ways.

At the youngest boy's soccer games, Kris would sit in a camp chair on the sidelines.

"For every game, we had Kris' chair and nobody sat in it," Marti Kohnke said. "And he wears her favorite number."

The boys are in counseling and therapy. They started school yesterday.

Heman admits there's still a lot of healing to do.

"This tragedy hit on many levels," said Heman. "First hand, there is the deep loss, shock and profound guilt we feel over Kris no longer being there. There has also been so much change and complete upheaval of our lives as a result of this. What the boys were accustomed to and what they knew as 'home' are gone. Set aside the horrific manner in which this happened - that alone has been unbearable to face."

Heman said the family knows they have a long road ahead filled with many challenges, but they're working together to help the boys.

"The boys are our motivation now and it is our greatest hope that they can still have a happy life," Heman said. "We are committed to giving them the best possible change for that."

The family has created a memorial fund for boy's future. It's called the Kristine Ann Kirk Memorial Fund. So far, they have raised more than \$31,000.

At the end of his last hearing, a judge ruled that there is sufficient evidence to make Richard Kirk stand trial for first-degree murder. He continues to be held without bond in Denver jail. His arraignment is set for Oct. 10.