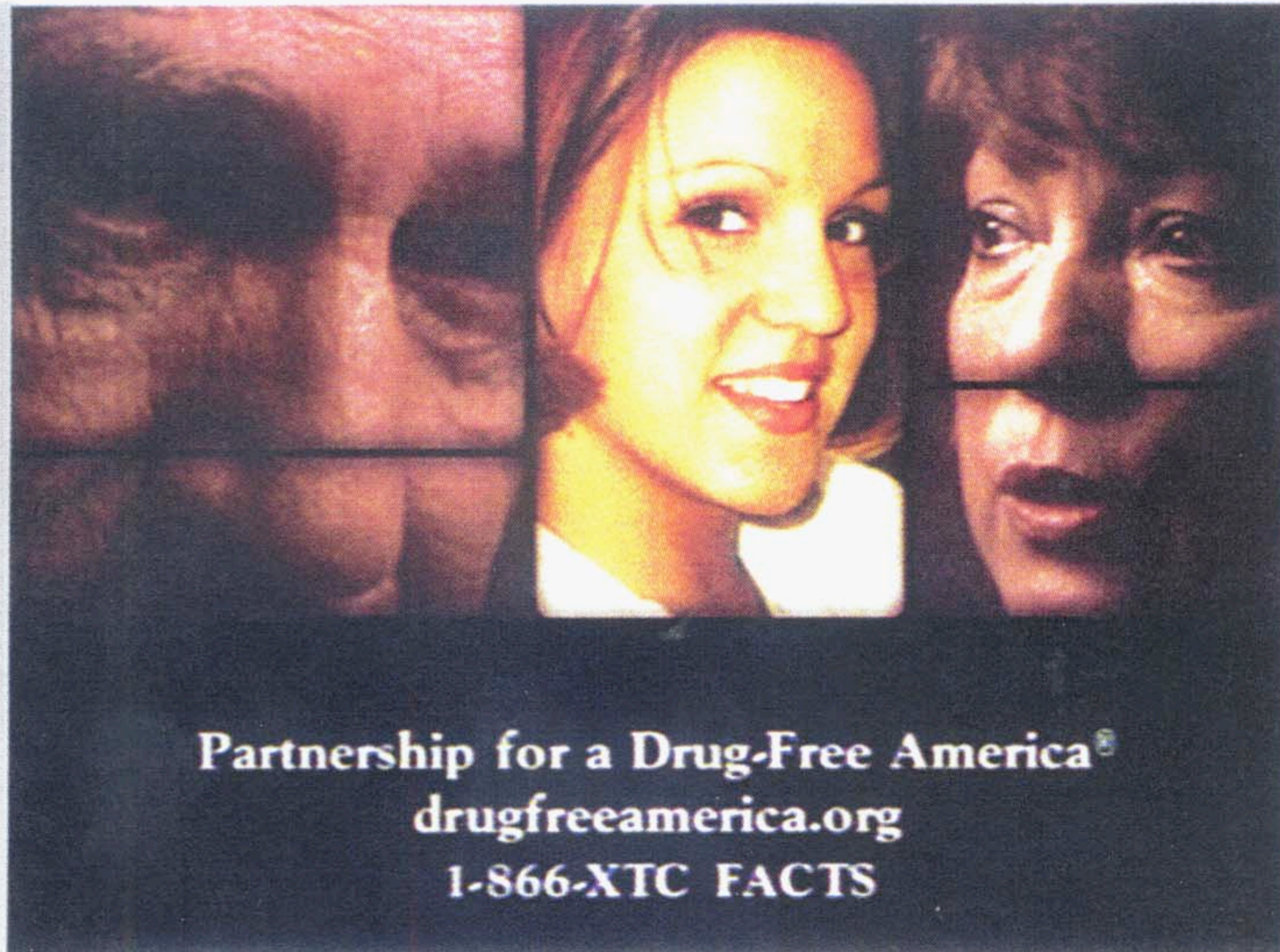


ADWEEK



Rave Danger

Directors draw on personal experiences in Ecstasy warnings

By Wendy Melillo

Danielle Heird had a life. Then she took two Ecstasy pills and ended up at the Clark County coroner's office in Nevada. She was 21.

Her story, ripped from the headlines in vintage *Law & Order* style, is the subject of four new 30-second PSAs in a campaign about Ecstasy breaking today from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Three more spots, aimed at teens, show how a seemingly harmless little pill can have devastating consequences.

The work was directed by two men—one a young, unknown Los Angeles director shooting his first commercials, and the other a seasoned professional from New York—who bring their personal experiences with drugs to each PSA.

Until now, Adam Reed's portfolio could be found on one spec reel. After witnessing his younger brother's experience with drugs—which recently landed him a two-year jail

sentence—the 25-year-old director applied to the Partnership for a chance to do the Ecstasy work. Reed's four spots, aimed at parents, blend testimonials from the parents and the coroner with photos of Danielle before her death.

Reed credits his personal experience with helping to persuade Elsa and Jim Heird, Danielle's parents, to speak out about their daughter. "I know what it is like to have someone's entire life taken over because of drugs, and I was able to translate that to the Heird family," Reed says.

The first spot shows Elsa Heird's bewilderment about MDMA, the chemical name for Ecstasy. "When the coroner came, I said, 'What is Ecstasy?'" she says. Jim Heird's emotion in the second spot is palpable. "I would have given anything for some warning signs," he says.

In the third spot, the images of Jim and Elsa form a mosaic with pictures

of Danielle as a baby, a young adult and an attractive young woman. The medical examiner who handled the case appears in the fourth spot, along with the text of the autopsy report.

For the PSAs aimed at teens, the Partnership turned to Bobby Sheehan, 41, who has worked with the group before, and Publicis in Toronto. Sheehan readily admits to his own past drug abuse. "Teenagers don't stop to think about what it is doing to their family and friends," he says.

"Flash Forward" opens with a girl dancing at a club. Sheehan plays with a time line in a technique inspired by the film *Run Lola Run*. As the girl laughs and hugs her partner, still photos of an ambulance approaching and a gurney appearing are cut in to foreshadow what's coming. The tagline, "So where's the love?" ends the spot. The second PSA uses a similar approach but is set in a suburban home (Sheehan's own).

Allen Rosenshine, chairman and CEO of BBDO Worldwide and co-chair of the Partnership's creative review committee, says he has yet to see anyone who has viewed the spots not walked away with a "bit of a lump in their throat."

Reed's four spots work on two levels, Rosenshine says. "It alerts parents to a drug they are probably not familiar with, and it tells kids Ecstasy is not the harmless party drug they think it is." In the spots aimed at teens, Rosenshine says, the irony in the tagline is a powerful way to deliver the message.

The pro bono campaign, worth an estimated \$20 million in free media, will run on networks and cable in major media markets that have seen Ecstasy-related tragedies. After local TV stations asked the Partnership for Ecstasy-specific spots, the group did a survey, to be released today, showing that teen use of Ecstasy has increased by 71 percent since 1999.

"This is no longer an anomaly," says Stephen Pasierb, the Partnership's president and CEO. "We have a three-year trend in Ecstasy that we have to respond to. This campaign will serve as an emotional wake-up call." ■

Partnership for a Drug-Free America

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