Speaking out, educating, and supporting other families are
some of the things Michal is doing to honor Ari’s memory.
Participating in a Jewish grieving parents group has been very
helpful for her, and she is working with a local program to do
more in the Jewish community.

That program, B’ri’ut, was the brainchild of Bart Neuman, a Congregation Ohev Shalom member and former Men’s
Club president, who was looking to take on his next service project. Bart reached out to the Federation, Jewish Family Services, and a few other agencies to get community buy-in.  After speaking with community leaders, it was clear that  substance abuse was a big problem in the Jewish community, but the stigma kept people from talking about it or finding out where to get help.  A committee was created to plan an approach to address substance abuse in our Jewish community.  As part of this, the committee secured commitments to participate from the rabbis, cantors, executive directors, and educators at every Jewish organization in the area, including The Jewish Pavilion, The Holocaust Memorial Resource & Education Center, Jewish Academy of Orlando, The Roth and Rosen JCCs, Jewish Federation, Central Florida Hillel, Chabad,Congregation of Reform Judaism, Congregation Ohev Shalom, Temple Israel, Congregation Beth Am, and Southwest Orlando Jewish Congregation. The B’ri’ut
program has also partnered with The Victoria’s Voice Foundation and the Osteen family.

The first phase of the program is a half-day educational presentation to community partners on substance abuse disorders,
the signs, and treatment options. A second presentation is for community leaders who may have direct contact with those dealing
with substance abuse. That presentation will be a workshop that teaches the Motivational
Interviewing (MI) technique for leading people to seek help with recovery. From there, B’ri’ut aims to establish support groups specifically for the Jewish community, which may often feel excluded from other programs that rely on religious teachings from
different denominations.

Creating a resource/referral guide and a social-media program for college students and young adults are two other goals. Finally, B’ri’ut is committed to ensuring the local Jewish organizations are supplied with NARCAN, a medication
that counteracts opioid overdoses and can be administered by non-medical individuals at no cost to the organization.

Post training, anyone in need of help should turn to their Jewish Organization in the Orlando area.  They will be able to assist you.

“I commend all the temples for coming together and realizing this is a Jewish problem,” says Michal. “Our clergy need to
be educated. We have to make it possible for our children to ask for help without shame and, more importantly, know that this is no joke. Kids are dying. They don’t want to die, and they’re dying. It can hit anybody. It’s like cancer. We used to never talk about cancer. It’s time to understand that this is the new killer.”