



# A Night to Remember

By Kendall Ungerman

**A**s a young girl, I was constantly surrounded by people with drug-filled veins and alcohol-filled blood. To me, growing up, I thought that it was normal. I didn't know any better, because the person that was supposed to be my role model for the woman I would become was the addict.

One summer night, I started off very happy. My best friend in the neighborhood was spending the night. I thought that maybe, for just one night, I would be able to feel like a child again. This short-lived wish was extinguished as her mother came with her. It should have been our dream to have mothers who were best friends like we were, but we could not ignore the fact that when they were together, they would lock themselves in a room and disappear for hours.

That night, we tried to ignore the smell of smoke and alcohol filling the apartment. As the night had progressed, more of my mother's friends and family came over. None were there for just the company. Being around people who were under the influence, there was no way we could have felt safe. We stayed in my room and masked our worry with laughter as we played games together; however, this laughter turned to sheer panic when we heard an argument erupt.

It became obvious that something was wrong when the voices turned

into yelling and the yelling turned into fighting. We could hear furniture being knocked over and glass being broken, both things that would startle anyone. But as children, the worst fear of all came when we heard four simple words being shouted: "He has a gun."

While the conflict ended as police arrived, it was hard for us to forget these events. While it had been normal for me to be around adults under the influence, it was the first time I realized just how dangerous it was to irresponsibly partake in these behaviors. It was the first time I had feared for my life.

No gunshots had been fired, but if the situation would have continued to escalate, there is a great possibility that there could have been injuries, or even death, that night. I had never felt so alone and so vulnerable before that day, and going through such a traumatizing encounter has warned me about the real dangers that drugs and alcohol come with.

The people involved in the incident were all people I loved, but they were not themselves; it is the drugs and the alcohol that altered their mindset. Nobody can say whether the argument would have still happened if the people involved had been sober; what I do know, is that it would not have been taken so far had they been.

In that moment, trapped in my room, my friend and I had no clue what to do. I know we made the right decision by staying out of the conflict, but it may have been smarter to try to think of a plan of escape in case things had escalated even further. If shots had been fired, we may have been stuck and our lives could have been lost.

This, however, wasn't the only encounter I had with drugs and alcohol. Eventually, my mother was put in jail, all because she made poor decisions and hung out with the wrong group of people. While I wish things had turned out differently, I am grateful to be on my way to creating a future that looks a lot different than hers.

There are two things that I hope anyone reading my story will walk away knowing. First, if there is ever a time in your life when you are around people who are under the influence, or if you are under the influence yourself, always be aware of your surroundings and be responsible. Not everyone will end up getting carried away like the people in our apartment did that night, but I think it is important for everyone to consider the possibility of events like these occurring.

Second, and most importantly, I hope that those reading this realize that it is possible to overcome addiction. While my mother and I hardly talk now, she is working hard each day to rebuild her life. While drugs and alcohol were the start of her downfall, they did not completely hold her back. Healing from such things may take time and effort, but it most definitely is possible.

In the end, I really do believe that staying sober is the best route. There are plenty of ways to enjoy life without risking addiction or alcoholism. We can stop events such as these from occurring, one person at a time. It all starts with awareness. 🙏

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Kendall Ungerman is a recent high school graduate from Colorado. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.