



# There Is Help

By Courtney Woods

**N**O CHILD asks for a dysfunctional family, I know I didn't. My father is a chronic alcoholic, and my grandma enabled his drinking. She was scared of him just as much as everyone else. He was very abusive and unpredictable. His drinking is the main reason for my own addictions. Anger built up inside me; and being taught that showing emotions is a weakness, I held everything in. I was not allowed to express my frustrations or concerns. As a result, I was determined to be heard somehow.

I started smoking cigarettes at age eleven, by age twelve I was addicted and smoking a pack a day. Stealing my dad's booze, sneaking out of the house, and getting wasted became an every night occasion with that wonderful group of people I called my friends. My grandma didn't know what to do, my dad did nothing. Knowing the path I was heading down, it scared me some. I realized I didn't want to be just like him, therefore I moved to Montana to live with my mom.

Moving to the west was like starting a new adventure. I missed my mom so much; it felt good to be with her again after seven years of separation due to my dad's selfishness. It felt like a fresh start, no more drinking, smoking, or sneaking out. I could be a to-

tally different person, or so I thought. My mom smoked a lot of cigarettes; as a result, I too started sneaking around smoking cigarettes every chance I could. So there I was again, right back where I started. However, I didn't realize how fast my bad behavior and rebellion had progressed. I was worse off than when I was living with dad.

Mom did everything she could; she tried grounding me, taking away electronics, calling the cops every time I left the house—nothing worked. My anger controlled me, I was so angry about the way my dad had treated me and the things he did to me. The friends I had met in Montana just made my addictions worse. They fueled them and encouraged them. Drinking, smoking cigarettes, and weed became nothing. I wanted more, I craved that ultimate high. By age 14 I was addicted to narcotics. Oxycodone, lortabs, and morphine were my life. From the time I woke up to the time I went to bed my life consisted of snorting, eating, popping, and sometimes injecting the drugs. At age 15 I started snorting and popping adderall, xanax, and valium. I would take downers until I couldn't move, then I would take uppers to wake myself up again. It was a dangerous combination, however I didn't care.

My mom knew something was

wrong. I was never home and my attitude was horrible. I was failing school and getting in fights. She decided to drug test me, I failed. Looking back now it could have been handled differently, my mother was harsh and unsympathetic about the entire situation. She was so devastated; driving me to a Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting was her way of giving me support. In the first four months of my recovery nothing was really said by anyone in the family. They would say good job, but that was about it. Maybe at that time I wanted everyone to notice my accomplishments. Nevertheless I am glad she forced me to attend NA meetings. It seems that was the only thing she knew to do that might help me.

On the other hand deep down I knew enough was enough, I was going to die if I didn't quit doing drugs and drinking. Attending the NA meetings at first was really hard. I didn't want to admit I had a problem with drugs and alcohol; I yearned for a normal life. NA made it possible for me to talk about my past, my addiction, drug use, and problems within my day to day life. It taught me how to make goals and to live a healthier future. My grades came back up to passing and I finished the year off with a "C" average. I am now two years clean and sober, college bound, about to graduate, and have so many different goals set for my future. Dreams are coming true and future career goals are being made. I plan to open a program following my college graduation for teens struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. No one has to do it alone. Remember you're not the only recovering addict out there, there is help available. Don't learn the hard way like I had to. 🙏

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

*Courtney Woods is a recent high school graduate from Montana. 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.*