



Something Valuable

By Annie Cooke

August 6th, 2013 at 11:17 PM, my life changed forever. I woke up from a nightmare that turned into a reality. I picked up my hands, and all I could see was broken glass and blood. Blood was dripping from my face onto my bloody clothes. I had been hit head-on by a drunk driver. I was only fifteen years old when I got a second chance at life. That night I was three miles from home, and I never pulled in the drive way. I never walked in the house and I didn't get to sleep in my own bed. I was scared; all I wanted was someone to tell me that everything was going to be ok. I spent five days in the hospital and one month in a wheel chair.

The drunk driver pleaded guilty and was sentenced to twenty years for felony vehicular homicide as his passenger died and ten years for felony vehicular assault for hitting me. There was no trial because the driver pleaded guilty and saved us at least two years of hearings and trials, but I still had to go on

the stand with him in the room and tell him my feelings. My dad, mom, and sister also had to explain their feelings about him almost killing me. This alone is something no family should have to go through. He has been in prison now for almost two years.

Two years later, I go to schools in my district to talk to teenagers about drinking and driving and how dangerous it is. I educate them about what drinking does to your body and how unhealthy it is for you. I inform them that getting behind a wheel while drunk is not just putting your life in danger but it is also putting other people's lives in danger. The best way for me to deal with the accident is to share my story with others to hopefully inspire them not to get in a car while intoxicated.

I learned that drinking not only affects the person drinking but family and friends also. I took this experience and turned it into a positive rather than a negative. I focused on getting well

and in doing so, I learned a lot about myself and my abilities. I surprised everyone, including myself, by wishing myself well and getting my body back to 110% from where I was before the accident. This according to my mother and father, who I realized through this whole encounter (because they are my biggest fans) that they too lost, having gone through the horror of almost losing their youngest daughter.

That day made me take a step back and realize that life is a special thing and that people are not going to hand you things. You have to be dedicated and work hard for what you want. Life is going to throw you curve balls, but you have to learn how to grow from them and become stronger. Those two months, when life seemed too hard, I took the challenge. Instead of laying there and feeling sorry for myself I got up and worked hard to get back to the life I loved before. I really wanted to play sports again.

Due to this drunk driver and his decisions my life changed drastically. I have always been driven to be the best, but the accident multiplied that drive; I proved this by playing volleyball two months after the accident, again surprising my doctor, coaches, family, and friends. They say a person cannot wish themselves well, but I did just that. My father showed me a saying that I believe fits me:

"If you are in jail, a prisoner of war, or in the death camps of World War II, the one thing they can't take away from you is attitude." I believe this reflects my situation. I have played basketball and volleyball, been team captain, and also homecoming queen, which demonstrates that I am even a leader among my peers. I could have given up, but I had something valuable that saved my life—attitude. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Annie Cooke 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.