



Prove Them Wrong

By Ashley Dooyen

“I wish I would have raised you better and not have put you through the things I have.” I have heard this sentence while watching the tears fall from my mother's eyes many times. The thing is, I do not wish that I was raised any differently. My mother and father's addiction gave me a motivation to rise above. They say that one is a product of their environment. I do not agree.

My childhood was not like most children's, it consisted of worrying. I worried about things a child should not have to. I worried about whether my mom was going to be home when I finished school. I worried about whether my mom had paid the bills. I worried about whether or not my mom was safe wherever she was that night. I also worried about whether or not she had passed that drug test she was so stressed out about the night before. My mom was addicted to meth, heroin, and prescription pills. Her addiction is what controlled not only her young life, but mine. I moved in with my dad because he believed that his house was

a safer place. While living with him, I continued to stay up at night continuing to worry about the woman who raised me.

Sitting on the couch next to my father and stepmom eating dinner, I glanced up at the T. V. after hearing "arrest warrant" followed by my mother's name. I could not believe my eyes, I did not want to believe them. Surveillance videos showed my mother, the young woman who raised me. The moment I heard her name on television, I felt betrayed, discouraged, enlightened, and relieved that now she would be forced to throw away the addiction that threw away our relationship. Later, she was sentenced two years in prison.

Shortly after moving in with my father and his girlfriend, my two beautiful brothers were born. I wished for those innocent boys that they will never have to see the effects that drugs have on a loved one the way I did. That wish only lasted so long. My grandmother on my father's side died in 2010, everything went downhill from there.

I noticed my dad turn into the man he used to be. The man for whom family was no longer a priority or even a care. My father was addicted to cocaine once again. Today I no longer hear the yelling, cheerful sound of my precious little brothers. I no longer smell the amazing love-filled, warm, homemade meals that my second mother cooked. I no longer have a family because the wonderful, caring woman my dad dragged into his addiction wanted more for herself and children. The feeling of watching my whole family be torn apart over a simple high, brings my eyes to tears and makes my stomach turn.

Watching firsthand what my parents' decisions did to their lives motivated me to become better: better than addiction, better than drugs, and better than they were. Once I learned that my life does not have to be like theirs, I promised myself that I would become the best I can. A promise I made is that I will never put myself in a circumstance where drugs could be a decision. Another is that I will not be a teen parent. With neither parent finishing high school I am 100% determined to be the first to graduate and walk with my classmates. Another promise is that I am going to not only attend college but graduate.

Watching addiction, I have learned to become independent. I was able to find my own motivation. I saw that education is a key in life. I learned to care about my future. These experiences have caused me to grow up fast, make wise decisions, and create motivation for myself and others. I learned that no matter what someone's background, there is nothing holding us back from becoming our best.

I am not a product of my environment and I am here to prove them wrong. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Ashley Dooyen is a recent high school graduate from Oregon. *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.