



# A Friend in Need

By Madisen Hansen

Alcohol has always been a problem within my school. Last year, 37 students from my school were cited for underages at one party. This makes me fear for the future of my fellow peers. I was unable to understand how someone would be willing to throw away their future for some dumb decisions that others called "fun." However, I did not cut myself out of this party atmosphere. I have always been known as being social; I like to know all sorts of different people. One of my friends, Colton, was an avid partier. I would not engage with anything that he would do, but I did not prevent anything from happening. If he wanted to go out and party, I would drive him and his other friends to the party and then pick them up. Many times Colton and his friends would try to persuade me to drink as well, and I would always decline it because I did not want to have that reputation around school and because I had always been told how bad drinking was. Unfortunately, being surrounded by all of that negativity is not easy.

Every weekend I would find myself in the same routine of picking up Colton, dropping him off somewhere, sleeping for a few hours, and then

waking up to pick up Colton and take him back to his house, my house, or some random person's house that he wanted to stay at. I got bored of the same routine and not getting a good night's sleep because I had to keep getting up and going back to sleep, so me being a "smart" teenager surrounded by peer pressure decided to tag along to a house party once. At the party, I felt so out of place. Everyone there was drinking and I did not know what to do. Everyone looked like they were having such a fun time. Many people were very drunk already and they looked happy, excited, and energetic. I was almost jealous of them. They seemed so delightful and like the life of the party. Different people in the room continued to offer me different drinks and I would continue to turn them down because I was afraid.

Sweaty bodies grinder all around me as I sat on the edge of the couch next to a couple getting a little too touchy. I did not know how to address the situation I was in. I did not want to leave because I would have to come back soon anyways because Colton would need me to pick him up. I continued to sit on the couch and play on my phone.

At one point during the night, Colton came over to me. I had not seen him the whole night, but I had not planned on seeing him anyways. He started to talk to me about how he was bored but did not want to leave. Colton and I ended up taking a walk outside to get away from the loud party atmosphere. I learned a lot about Colton that night. Colton had come from a long line of alcoholics, and he had tried to avoid the party life but he ended up in a bad friend group. Colton told me that he did not want to drink anymore, but he felt that if he did not, he would be physically sick. He said that he would frequently wake up in the middle of the night and take shots of vodka or whatever he had around him; he would even take alcohol to school and drink it in the bathroom and in between classes. My heart broke for him. I was unable to understand how someone could feel that way because I have never felt that way, but I knew that he needed my help. Colton and I ended up leaving the party and going over to his house. Colton and I sat down with my parents and I helped Colton express his feelings to his parents about his addiction. His mom broke down crying and promised to help him in any way that she could.

Colton ended up going to a rehab facility for three months. Since that night at the party, Colton has not drank. Colton still goes to AA meetings and is pursuing his Bachelor's Degree at SDSU. He and I found a better friend group to be a part of.

Colton taught me that while a situation may look bad, all you have to do is ask for help and then things will get better. I'm glad that Colton asked for me to help him. I'm proud to say that he is still one of my best friends and that he will be for a long time. 🙏

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Madisen Hansen is a high school senior from South Dakota. *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.