



# Tragedy and Triumph

By Elizabeth Voegeli

**A**lcohol abuse is something that is very prevalent in my family. My mother's sister, Trish, and my father's brother, Kent, were extreme alcoholics. They were married for many years, and for most of their marriage they each had a bottle in their hands. They encountered many struggles and dealt with many hard situations. The story of alcoholism in my family is one of tragedy and triumph.

My aunt was twelve years old when she had her first taste of alcohol. She attended a festival in the park with her friend when they asked an eighteen-year-old to buy them beer. Her friend's parents were alcoholics, so they would slip over to their house and drink once her parents passed out. All of her high school years were filled with sneaking around and lying. Her freshman year, she traveled to Chicago with the band. She put alcohol in shampoo bottles so she wouldn't get caught. Her junior year of high school, she found out she was pregnant with Kent's baby. Kent was married at the time, but when he found out about the pregnancy, he got a divorce. This began the tumultuous relationship between Trish and Kent.

When Trish and Kent's daughter, Victorria, was five years old, they

finally decided to get married. However, their marriage was far from perfect and they encountered many difficulties along the way. Kent was a worse alcoholic than Trish, and he got in trouble multiple times for his drinking. He broke into businesses to steal beer, got pulled over twice for driving under the influence, and once he even got so drunk that he pulled down a Christmas tree that was in the center of town. When this happened, he went to court and the judge gave him thirty days in jail. This actually helped him to become sober and get his life on track. During this time of sobriety, Kent and Trish had another child: a son named Vance. However, this sobriety did not last long.

The drinking for Trish and Kent continued. They both managed to keep jobs, but they would drink when they got home and would sometimes even go to work drunk. When asking Trish about this, she said, "I would go to work legally drunk almost every day." Trish and Kent would go to bars at night and then make their ten-year-old son drive them home. Things spiraled out of control and so did their marriage. They eventually got a divorce which led to more

drinking. Kent had gotten three DUI's within a two-year period. One night, Kent attended a New Year's Eve party where he got into an argument with another man. The man punched Kent and he fell to the floor and died at only forty-three years old. I never really got to know Kent, and tragically I never would get to know the wonderful man he had been before alcohol.

After Kent's death, Trish moved back home so her parents could help her take care of the kids. Through everything, her family was always trying to get her to stop drinking. They even had an intervention with her; although, it was not successful. One night, she was dehydrated and vomiting and begged her dad to take her to the hospital. After, she was released from the hospital, she decided to enter treatment.

I talked to Trish about why she decided to go to treatment. She said, "I was constantly lying about my drinking. I couldn't sleep. When I did fall asleep, I would wake up within three hours so I could have a drink. I would go to bed hopeless. I would just pass out every night. That is when I knew I needed to go back to the hospital." Then she went on to say, "I just couldn't help myself anymore. I had a need to fill and it was filled with alcohol.

Trish went to Alcoholics Anonymous after treatment and has been sober for almost ten years now. In this story, Kent is the tragedy and Trish in the triumph. She is here and sober and I now have a wonderful relationship with her. One thing I remember her saying is, "The ones that have good families, usually stay sober. I had a good family and that keeps me sober." I, for one, am so thankful for the amazing, supportive family I have. 🙏

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Elizabeth Voegeli 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.