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Grade 12

### Drug Free Club Scholarship Essay

Drugs are becoming extremely prevalent in today's teenage population. Throughout my 13 years in public school, drugs have become a topic of discussion more and more each year. It started to become alarming to me the number of students who were openly using them during my sophomore year. I believe it was the perfect time for Drug Free Clubs of America to start building a community within my school. In the past three years I have seen such a simple, yet powerful club transform my life and the community around me simply by creating a sense of belonging and accountability.

Oftentimes, young people fall into drug use simply because they do not want to feel like the "odd one out." It was my sophomore year when I truly began feeling as though I was outnumbered by people who had at least tried drugs of some sort. I knew that I did not want to, but I was lacking confidence in my ability to actually say no if the situation presented itself. For the same reason as others; I was scared of being alone in my decision. This club completely changed that for me. As I looked around the full gym of students signing up and getting ready for the initial drug test, I realized I really was not alone. In fact, there were people all around me who were making the same exact decision to be drug free. This group of people allowed me to form a more positive thought process when it came to saying no, should the opportunity ever arise. Instead of feeling like I would be the only one, I now knew that I had a community behind me to make proud. This became the only thing that mattered.

Beyond my group at school, I believe my participation also shaped a better relationship between my parents and I. They grew more confident in my decision making and we began to build more trust with one another as I learned the importance of staying away from drugs. We were able to have open conversations about these difficult topics because I was learning everything that I should know from my resources at school. This led to many positive conversations that I otherwise would not have had.

Not only did joining this club allow for great conversations at home, but also with my friends and people in the community. The local businesses giving discounts to those of us who were a part of Drug Free Club was a great reminder that we are supported in our decisions. It became clear to see that saying "no was" definitely the best and most popular decision, even if it did not always seem that way. Drug Free Clubs of America definitely gave me a sense of belonging, accountability, and leadership. For that, I will always be grateful.