

11th grade
Auburn Career Center
Angelina G

I sign up for a lot of things- school clubs, sports, summer camp volunteer- just about anything. My mother is very involved in the school and community, so as I grew up that was a normal thing to do. I had never put much prior thought into why a particular club is important or what I hope to get from the volunteer opportunity, and I've become a member of different groups for so long, that it simply happens without any hesitancy. However, when I was introduced to the opportunity to be a member of the Drug Free Clubs of America, it felt different.

Drugs and alcohol are not a part of my life in any way. Nobody in my family or circle of friends drinks or does any drugs, and my mom has talked to me about the dangers of drugs for years. I realize now that I was *passively* making a decision to be drug-free. Becoming a member of the DFCA gave me the opportunity to make being drug-free an *active* decision. As a 16-year old, up until now my mom has made all of my health-related decisions- like what vaccines I get and what medicines I take. Registering for DFCA is the first health-related decision I've ever made for myself. I'm truly proud of myself for actively deciding to remain drug-free and to support my friends and peers who are making this same decision.

Membership in DFCA has changed the way that I think about signing up for membership to all groups. I realize now that some groups look great on my college resume, but they may not offer much personal growth or have any effect on my health. Being a member of DFCA has brought to light that what is truly important are the activities that I can participate in that are good for my mental and physical health. Because of this, I have changed the way that I look at potential colleges. Not only am I looking for the academic opportunities that align with my future goals, but I have also begun researching what types of positive health-based opportunities are on the college campuses. This has given me a more well-rounded approach to my future.

Probably the biggest change for me is that, for the first time, I felt like I was making a grown-up choice on my own. Committing to remain drug-free is a very mature decision. When DFCA was presented to me at school, I was on my own in that moment and presented with an opportunity to commit to something without my mom's input. I know that if I falter in this, I will be disappointed in myself and I'll be forced to have a really tough conversation at home. I know that my life will just continue to be full of "grown-up" decisions that I will have to weigh consequences in my mind and make on my own. DFCA registration was a great first step.

My future will include college and a career and a family and friends to share all of that with, but none of that will be possible if I do not actively make decisions about my health. Joining Drug Free Clubs of America highlighted that for me. I am thankful to have the opportunity to be a part of this group that has given me a chance to *decide* to be healthy, to have a more *well-rounded* viewpoint on my future memberships and most importantly for me, to begin the life-long journey of making good decisions *on my own*.