

First and foremost my name is Madysen Sykes and I'm a senior at McClain High School. When I first learned of this scholarship I knew right away that I wanted to at least try for it since I'm a two-year officer and know a lot about the club. I'd like to dive straight into this essay and explain how DFCA changed me and my family for the better. DFCA is still very new to my school and I was selected as one of the original officers. For the past two years, I've been pushing students to join the club. Eventually, I was able to get both of my brothers to join as well. I never realized how much DFCA could teach me and my brothers until the summer of 2021.

During the summer I and my brothers lived with my single mother. My mom struggled throughout life and lost her sister unfortunately to drug addiction and cancer. My aunt was in and out of prison her entire life because of drugs. I watched from a very young age what drugs can do to your body. I knew no matter what I didn't want that life for me and my brothers. This influence made me more passionate about DFCA along with the other hardships of my life. Drugs are very scary and addictive but what I and my brothers had to deal with was alcoholism. My mother always knew she had a drinking problem which led to her being in and out of hospitals throughout her 30s. Eventually, she went to rehab for her problem. The day she was released my stepfather unexpectedly passed away. This caused my mom to relapse and start drinking again for the next 4 years and developing type 2 diabetes. My brothers and I saw firsthand how alcohol can alter your mood and personality on a daily basis. Her problem only got worse and worse.

My mother wouldn't eat anything all day and constantly drank liquor. She was very aggressive and had even called the police on my brothers and me for "misbehaving." Finally, we were put into a safety plan that allowed us to live with one of our aunts and still see my mom as long as my aunt was present. All my mom would have to do was some parenting classes and a type of rehab. She didn't do this and she was caught at our aunt's house without my aunt being there. This landed me and my brothers in the foster care system. This was hard knowing it's my senior year I just wanted to enjoy it. About a month passes and my family and I find out my mother passed away. The news made me feel crushed like I couldn't move or breathe. My mom's sugar had bottomed out and with her being a diabetic due to her alcoholism she wasn't able to make it. It was hard on me and my brothers. I had so much to think about and to worry about. College being one of my biggest problems. More importantly the cost, now I had no family to financially support me and help me through it. Things got better the Friday I went back to school.

The week I went back on Friday I was given the opportunity to go to a DFCA rally event. I learned on the way there I would have to say a few words on stage to represent my school. I was nervous, to say the least, and had no clue what to say. I decided I wanted people to know me and understand my passion for DFCA. I spoke about my mother in front of strangers. Hoping and praying they got the message I was sending. The message to help one another and never stop fighting drugs. Alcohol is just as bad as drugs and watching someone you love go down that path is never easy. When I heard the applause it was like the weight that was pressing on my chest was gone. Talking about my family and the problems and struggles helped in a way I couldn't explain. Understanding that other DFCA members heard my story and hopefully remembered it. Hurting is a part of life but when you have friends and family to help you it makes life easy. That's exactly what DFCA did for me and my brothers. I'll never forget this club or the members. The sense of community it brought to our school is amazing and I hope once I graduate it continues to be just as special for everyone else. Being the face of my DFCA club will forever be memorable. I wish I could thank all of the members of DFCA for their help and most importantly thank the club as a whole for giving me the opportunity to fight this huge problem plaguing many people's lives. The problem will never be finished but with kids like me fighting for what's right, it will get better.