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I come from a relatively small family plagued by addiction. My father struggled with addiction for a long time, and it broke apart my family. He used various drugs throughout the course of his life, and eventually, those drugs led to his suicide. My father's death broke my family apart and changed my life forever. Here I was, an only child with a single mother and a broken family.

After several years without my father, my mom began to try and find love again. Unfortunately for us, she ended up with another addict, but this one was worse. Her boyfriend Chad had an opioid addiction we were unaware of for some time. Eventually, things began mysteriously disappearing around our house. He stole numerous items from not only my mother but also from me. He stole many sentimental things. My uncle's guitar, jewelry, and a Disney movie collection, and unfortunately, he stole items from my dad. These were things that I was supposed to have, but sadly I had them taken from me. All of these stolen items went to local pawn shops, and he used the money received from them for his drugs. I will never get back these precious items because of a man with an addiction. Chad's drug problem made him unpredictable, and I often saw him verbally and once even physically abuse my mother. Seeing these things at a young age still haunts me to this day. I never learned to process these emotions, and I felt that no one else experienced them until I discovered the Drug-Free Clubs of America.

I joined my school's club during my sophomore year of high school, but it wasn't until my junior year that it deeply impacted me. That year our club went to the big rally at Southeastern High School. Here we heard many speakers tell their stories about how addiction has impacted their lives. Some of these stories were from adults, but the ones that made the strongest impression on me were the stories told by high school students. Many of these stories were parallel to my childhood, and for the first time, I finally realized that I was not alone and that so many children have experienced these situations.

Realizing how many young people are affected by addiction helped me decide on my career path. I always knew I wanted to be a nurse, but I didn't know what specialty I wanted to pursue. Seeing how many kids have been affected by this drug epidemic made me want to help them in any way I can. This rally made me decide to pursue pediatric nursing. I want to work in my community and be a voice of comfort to the children who are struggling, whether it's physically or emotionally. With my career and throughout my college years, I also hope to participate in volunteer work surrounding children affected by drugs.

The Drug-Free Clubs of America is a fantastic organization, and I have to say that it has changed my life. It gives all of its members a chance to say no to the substances that could potentially ruin their life, and it also offers tremendous rewards to all involved. Before I attended that first rally, I did not realize how many people experienced the same issues as myself. After this realization, I now know what my future career path is. I want to help other children who have experienced the horrors of addiction. I hope to make a difference in the lives of the children in my community just as DFCA has made a difference in my life and given me my community.