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#### Empowering Choices

DFCA was created to help prevent the preventable injury and death resulting from drug use. There are five strategies employed for success: drug testing, positive reinforcement, student leadership, parental support and education. I have chosen to focus here on friendship and my own self. There is an adage "you can judge a person by the company they keep." I strive to carry myself with a dignity of high standards. This includes what I expect of myself, how I treat others, what is fair to expect from others and how I respond in difficult situations. Acts of giving and kindness help guide me through life. Although I am not 100% there yet, I wish to imbue these as part of me, always.

The word "friend" carries great weight for me. We have friends and we have acquaintances. Oftentimes, the latter develops into the former. Sometimes, the former evolves into the latter and this can happen for reasons related to an event, distance, maturity and our developing sense of self. Though I value the positive impact that I can have on others, I especially hold dear this principle with my friends. DFCA has given me reassurance in the people I can trust. I feel it is an important aspect in life to have positive relationships surrounding you. Having a support system to go to could be life-changing for you. DFCA has given me an outlet to go to if I am ever asked or peer pressured to try something I don't want to. With so many individuals my age doing things I am not comfortable with, I really have discovered who I can and cannot trust.

Holding myself to high standards has taught me how to overcome challenges and develop new skills along the way. Having high standards of yourself can influence positive relationships in your life. High standards could open new doors to new opportunities and experiences. This past year has been a reality check for me. I learn more about myself each and every day. DFCA has encouraged me to keep those high standards, and enforce them more than ever before. DFCA has given me confidence in the decisions I make for myself. But most importantly, DFCA has changed my outlook on myself and my friends. I have learned it is okay to be different and not do what other "cool" teens are doing during this time of my life.

In conclusion, being able to say you are "drug-free" is not just a bragging right but a powerful choice that shows self respect and potential in life. Drug testing, positive reinforcement, student leadership, parental support and education are the key elements in assuring success. These are elements that DFCA has implemented, and they are very successful. I will, and always have, value my friendships and the impact I make on another person's life. Starting a drug-free program at the young age that I am will positively impact my life going forward. I hope I can be seen as a trustworthy person in my future endeavors. Thank you DFCA.