



I Love You No Matter What

By Haley Hemore

THERE ISN'T a family in this world that doesn't have its problems. Some problems, of course, are bigger than others. The family I was born into has the problem of addiction, and as a family we all share the pain. My parents are methamphetamine addicts. One of my mother's sisters died of alcoholism. My mom's other sister died of a heroin overdose. Both of my mother's parents were heavy drinkers for many years of their lives. Being an addict of drugs or alcohol is one family expectation that I do not plan to live up to in any way.

I spent the first sixteen years of my life with two methamphetamine addicts. I called them mom and dad. They were my parents by birth, and I had grown up to love them despite their shortcomings. I witnessed countless physical fights as a child, and heard many terrible things they said to each other. I watched my parents steal, lie, and cheat to get whatever they wanted. My grandmother would often take me to visit my parents in jail because of their drug habits. Sometimes, it felt like they didn't care that I was watching them, they only cared about the next time they could get high. My mom shared a story with me when I was about twelve years old. She told me that she used to keep all her meth bags in her closet in the house we

lived in when I was a baby. One day she was about to make a sale and she went upstairs to grab a bag. She then recounted the bags and noticed she was one short. She told me that she walked in on me, her three year old daughter, in my room with an open bag almost ready to ingest the methamphetamine. Unfortunately, the thought of losing her child wasn't enough to curb her addiction.

The drugs, violence, and all around dysfunctional lifestyle got worse as I grew up. I was forced to cover for my parents when people came by that they didn't want to talk to. I covered for my father when my mother would ask if he had been out all night. I watched for Wal-Mart employees as my mom would sneak something into her purse. I was their puppet. I didn't like our life, and wanted change. I refused to enable them to continue down their paths of destruction. Being meth addicts, my lack of support caused them to be extremely angry with me. Although I was their one and only child, their baby girl, they would often kick me out of the house and then invite me back after they cooled off. I was the enemy at home and it seemed as if I would never escape the nightmare.

My mom and I finally decided that it would be best if I didn't live with her anymore and I should move to

Minnesota with her father. He would get me through high school and I wouldn't have to deal with my parents' drug abuse. At the time, I wasn't sure if moving was the best choice, but it was my only choice. My first year in Minnesota was a hard, depressing year. I suffered with severe depression and my parents were in and out of jail. I hated being away from my parents and they cried with me on the phone many times and told me they missed me just as much.

My parents weren't ever very honest with me, so I had to be honest and true to myself and follow through with my decision. I stayed in Minnesota and now have plans for college and a real future ahead of me. I would've never reached this point if I would've stayed in Washington with them. Mom and dad are trying to clean up their lives to get me back. My mother has even been to treatment a few times. The final outcome of my move to Minnesota has not only given me a future, but it has also helped my parents see that they have a problem. I occasionally have to set limits with my parents, because they're getting too close again and they still live in the drug world. It's hard to be away from my parents, but I know that I made the right choice because we're all benefiting and prospering in our own ways. Despite the things my parents put me through, I still love them and always will. I now know that you can't control other people, but you can control yourself. And the greatest lesson I've learned from my family is that doing what's right isn't always easy, and may even be the biggest challenge in life. But the harder the task, the greater the reward. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Haley Hemore recently graduated from high school in Minnesota. **Alert Magazine** congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.