



# My Parents

By Marissa Barlow

**WHILE MOST** parents are worried about getting their kids to day-care mine were worried about where they were getting their next fix. These were the “adults” that were setting an example for me. Their actions taught me more than any lecture could have. They shaped who I am today, what I believe in and they provided me with a story to tell others in hopes of it positively affecting their views on staying above the influence of drugs.

My relationship with my mother was amazing. We collected seashells from every beach we went to, she read me every Disney princess book before bed and sang silly songs with me in the car. However, the reality of our family situation hit me hard. She couldn't hold a job, and all the money she made went to her drug habit. Eventually her actions caught up to her and she was forced to check into a rehabilitation center called Sea-Dru-Nar (Seattle Drug & Narcotic Center, Inc). Through the program she worked for a recycling plant that eventually took her life. A machine was accidentally turned on while she

was working on it, and she took her last breath on October 5, 2000.

Because of this unfortunate accident I had to go and live with my father in Oregon. We hadn't always had the best relationship, but throughout time we became extremely close. After going through what I did with my mom I was really happy that I finally had someone to look up to. He always made sure I knew the type of mistakes my mother made and how I could avoid them: “Don't give in to peer pressure, honey, don't do drugs.” I took his words to heart because I looked up to him. I respected his opinion and I knew he was right. Little did I know, however, I was setting myself up for yet another disappointment. In December of 2009 I found out about my father's drug addiction to heroin. Even though all drugs are bad, heroin is the most fatal. Heroin is an opiate, which acts as an endorphin and is also a pain killer and a mood elevator. Because heroin has such a powerful effect, users usually always go back for more and more. This builds up their tolerance quickly

and in most cases it will cause an overdose, resulting in death.

Finding these things out and applying them to my father really scared me. I was afraid that his life wouldn't be the same or even worse, that he would die at any second. I wasn't ready to lose him yet, and I wasn't willing to live in that environment again. I told my school counselor the whole ordeal and cooperated with Child Protective Services as well. I was removed from my father's home and before moving in with my aunt, I stayed in a foster home for a short while.

Even though my parents have not provided me with the best circumstances to live in, I am still grateful for growing up the way I did. My parents set examples for me to follow; they just showed me the wrong things to do. Both of my parents taught me so much about the impact drugs can have on everyone around, not just the user but on the whole family as well. I have also learned what strength and perseverance truly means. The adversity that I have had to overcome has made me a type of soldier in a way; I am an independent and strong woman who can overcome anything that is thrown my way. Now I am involved in lacrosse, dance team and key club. I am also a hard-working student who next fall will be a first generation college student. This experience has helped me in so many ways and if this story can help others too, then I will always be willing to share it. I just want everyone to know that their past is not an excuse to fail; it's an incentive to do better for yourself. ☹️

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

*Marissa Barlow is a high school senior from Washington. Alert Magazine congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We also encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.*