



# How are You Supposed to Say Goodbye?

By Kinzie Hague

Asking a high school senior to describe and explain their encounter with a peer and his or her alcohol or drug abuse is like asking a six year old to explain Einstein's theory of relativity. Throughout the years and into today's generation we as a society see alcohol and drugs abused daily, especially in the high school scene. High School students are young, naive, and think they're on top of the world with feelings of immortality. Nothing can bring them down, right? Although I wish it were as simple as saying let's not drink or do drugs, it's often impossible for teenagers to comprehend the detrimental outcomes that can result from drug and alcohol abuse. Sadly, in many cases it takes a devastating incident to understand the consequence. Drug and alcohol abuse is deadly and can't be stopped until we take a stand against it.

July 21, 2015: I remember every detail of this day like it was yesterday. July is the prime month of the year for any high school student. It's the sweet morning breeze; it's the hum of the lawnmower and children's laughter that squeeze through the crack in your window; it's the feeling when you awake and have not a care in the world; it's summer. I remember waking on the gorgeous morning of July 21st. I was eager to adventure outside in the sunshine. My friend

Taylor drove over to my house and we headed straight to beautiful Tubbs Hill, known for its scenic hike around Lake Coeur d'Alene. After our hike I headed off to work where I got a phone call that would change not only my life but the community of Coeur d'Alene forever.

My cousin called my work, her voice was shaking, I knew immediately something was wrong. The words she spoke to me didn't make sense and were unbelievable. She explained to me that Reggie, our close friend had jumped off a boat going 50 mph into the lake and never came back up. I knew how big of a "prankster" Reggie was and immediately went to the thought that he was just pulling another one of his classic jokes. Surely he had swam to shore. Immediately Taylor met me and we headed out around the lake to Arrow Point, a 45 minute away destination where the incident had happened. As we drove out around the lake the most beautiful sunset begin to paint fuchsia and yellow tones across the sky and through all the chaos and emotions I felt a sense of peace. The drive out there seemed to take an eternity. Everything in those moments seemed to be so surreal that it didn't make sense to us yet that Reggie could actually be gone.

We arrived down on the docks of the marina as the sunset just dipped down over the mountains. I've never been able

to describe the feeling of devastation and I don't think any amount of words will ever be able to convey the look of the faces of the people who stood on that dock with me that night. Reggie's dad, the search and rescue team, my best friends; the look on their faces that was devastation. I hope nobody in this world will ever have to endure the feeling we felt that night as we looked out over the lake. How are you supposed to look out and say goodbye to somebody who was just there hours ago? How do you look at the faces of a search and rescue team and make sense of the fact that they can't continue their search? How do you possibly accept the words "this is a search and find mission now, not a search a rescue mission". I realized in that moment that the gorgeous sunset that filled the sky that night was Reggie. He was looking down on us and momentarily telling us he was in a better place.

What happened that day on the lake isn't because accidents happen. It wasn't because it was Reggie's time to go. It was because underage drinking leads us to make decisions that at the time seem reasonable. We believe they'll make humorous stories, but what happens when you don't get to see the day that story is told? That's what happened to Reggie. To the most energetic, kind spirited, goofy, loving kid that could light up a room with his presence, his story will live on. To sit here and say I've never taken a sip of alcohol is hypocritical. To any high school student who can say they've never seen alcohol or drug abuse occur without taking a stand is a lie. We are all bystanders and it shouldn't take a tragic accident and the loss of a loving soul to make a change. WE are the change. WE can be the change. All it takes is one moment of courage to stand for what we know is right. I hope that's what Reggie's story can leave our community with: a simple feeling of devastation that can push us in the right direction towards sobriety. Drug and alcohol abuse is deadly, and it won't stop until we stop it ourselves. 🍷

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Kinzie Hague is a recent high school graduate from Idaho. *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.