

## "Drugs and Violence in Our Schools and Community"

I have been a victim and witness of the detrimental effects drugs can have on a person and their family. My older sister is a drug addict. My family has tried over and over again to help her, but she does not want to change. It is baffling to me how a smart girl from an upper middle class family can turn to a life of hustling on the streets of Baltimore. The lessons I have learned from watching my sister's demise will aid me in leading a drug free life.

This past fall my sister was arrested in Baltimore for selling marijuana. She spent three days in the Baltimore City Penitentiary, in conditions I can not even begin to describe. Our father posted bail and she returned to my mother's house to live with my mom, my brother, and myself until her trial date. While she was home we tried to make her see the mistakes she was making, but she denied having a problem and refused our assistance. She attended drug counseling, even though she disagreed with us that she was an addict.

I became a victim on October 8, 2001 when my sister stole my car. We welcomed her back into our home and offered any assistance she needed, and she returned the favor by committing a crime against her own sister. For three days I did not know where my sister and my car were. I felt helpless, I was a victim of crime and it felt terrible. My parents were torn between two children. They could either get my car back by issuing a warrant for her arrest, or hope that my sister returned with my car. We made the decision that this would have to be a time to teach her the lesson that she cannot keep living her life so recklessly. She was arrested in Baltimore and my car was taken to the Baltimore City Impound Lot. My father and I drove to the impound lot and retrieved my car, while my sister was transported to the Cecil County Detention Center. I was upset to find cigarette burns in my leather seats, trash all over the car,

and dust caked on the exterior, but I felt overwhelmed with sadness because my sister committed a crime against me. I know she would not have done this if she was not taking drugs.

She stayed in jail for two weeks until her trial for stealing my car. She was angry with me for pressing charges, and with my dad for letting her stay in jail. Once she got out she never spoke to us again. My dad tries to write her letters, but she does not reply. I never received an apology, she never even offered a reason for stealing my car. I know the real reason though, she had to have drugs.

Drugs not only destroy people physically, they reap havoc emotionally on the families of addicts. I do not know where my sister is, or if she is even alive. My parents have been stressed beyond imagination. I learned that you can only help drug addicts if they are willing to be helped. My life will be lead drug free, because I do not want to hurt my family the way my sister has hurt us. Every time I hear people talking about drugs I become sad and angry. They do not know how it feels to deal with addiction. Drugs are not cool, they make people change into horrible criminals.

Every day I want to find my sister and help her, hopefully some day she will realize what she is doing and undergo treatment. The pain I feel for my sister is almost unbearable. Christmas was distressing for my family because there were presents for my sister left unopened. She did not even call to say 'Happy Holidays', and she has not called to let us know she is okay. My grandfather died and she missed the funeral, all because drugs are the most important thing in her life. Until the day I find her, the only power I have is to dissuade others from taking drugs, maybe they will learn a lesson from my story and think twice when confronted with drugs.