


**THE DRUG WAR IN COBB**

# 18-year-old Laura has lived the nightmares of a lifetime



**Laura**  
An 18-year-old addict in treatment, she is concerned about drug use among today's youth

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Laura was raped and beaten, had a gun held to her head and spent time in jail. She tried to commit suicide and almost died several times. She blames it all on her drug use.

Now 18, Laura started drinking when she was 12. By her own admission, her drug use stemmed from curiosity.

"At the time I started, I really

believed it [drugs] would help me," the dark-eyed girl said. "But when I look back, I see I was more shut off, more violent, more isolated, and my grades slipped."

Her first drug of choice was alcohol, but she also used marijuana and amphetamines.

"I got it from a friend who stole it from her mother," she said.

Marijuana, she said, was easily available at school.

"I was selling speed by the

time I was 12," Laura said.

Today, Laura is a client at STRAIGHT Inc. on Austell Road in Marietta. She is proud of her 25 clean days. The decision to enter treatment scared her, and she relapsed once after entering the program.

"I came here from prison," she said.

Her criminal convictions have been on charges ranging from writing stolen checks to possession of drugs. For Laura, STRAIGHT is an alternative to prison, and she hopes that her

treatment will result in a suspended sentence. Laura is on a "furlough" from jail, and her sentence is expected to be suspended at the conclusion of treatment.

Her voice shakes and she tries not to cry when she talks about young kids using drugs.

"When I see kids getting into that, it scares me," she said. "I would tell them not to. I'm really pretty nice, but I mean, drugs turned me into a criminal. I lost everything I had. I've been raped. One time, I had a gun held to my

head on a street downtown during a drug deal. I was close to death when I came in [to treatment]. I have acid flashbacks. I've known three people who committed suicide. One guy got shot in the head during a drug deal."

Staying clean is a day-to-day trial for the teenager, who now looks forward to a career in music.

"I'll expect I'm going to have problems. But I expect to work the 12-step program, or I'll end up dead or back in jail," she said.