

Daughter straightens out her life with help from mom, Kids Helping Kids

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One year ago Thursday, Kristen ██████ broke away from the demons that were beating her up and holding her captive.

"My daughter decided to get help in dealing with her addictions," said Tina ██████. "Just a year ago, she was my sad, withdrawn and very sick baby. Now she is 16 and I am so proud she has faced down all those terrible things and is healthy, happy and sober."

Kristen, who lives in Union and is a sophomore at Northmont High School, said she began experimenting first with marijuana when she was 12.

"My parents were divorced, and my stepfather died from cancer, and my world just seemed to crumble," Kristen said. "I was offered cocaine, and ecstasy, and illegal prescription drugs, and was drinking alcohol. I tried it all, and one day I realized I hated myself. I hated my life. I hated what I was doing. But I felt trapped."

She developed an eating disorder, she said, and at a height of 5-foot-3, with a normal weight of 130, she weighed 80 pounds. She became pregnant, and because of her lifestyle she said she lost the baby in a miscarriage.

"I cut myself. I tried to take my own life. I was just as low as you can be. Yet I hid it from my mother as long as I could."

Tina, a computer data processor at Good Samaritan Hospital, said she noticed Kristen's circle of friends had changed, and she became withdrawn.

"One day I heard that she was trying cocaine," Tina said. "I confronted her. She denied using drugs. I whipped out a home drug test I bought. She then admitted using cocaine, but said she didn't like it and quit."

Kristen figured her mother knew.

"It was very emotional," she said. "I told her I needed help. I knew if I didn't get help I would die."

After extensive searching, Tina enrolled Kristen in the Kids Helping Kids program, a Pathway Family Center at 6070 Branch Hill Guinea Pike in Milford.

"When Kristen first came here she was completely out of control," said Jayme Smith, who was Kristen's clinician at the center. "We realized she had great potential, but was in over her head."

Smith said Kids Helping Kids is built upon positive peer pressure. "We divide our kids into small groups. Kids tend to trust other kids." Smith said on weekends the young people go to each others' homes and continue working together, "always with a counselor and a caring parent present."

"Kristen was with us 10 months and is a success story. But she knows that you still deal with temptations day-by-day," Smith said.

"It cost me quite a bit of my savings to get this help for my daughter," Tina said. "But this was my child's life, and I did what I had to do."

Lisa said Kristen is back in high school now, but has found it a challenge adapting.

"I am staying away from the circle of friends I used to hang with, and I am having trouble making new friends," Lisa said. "I must admit I was a mean person back then and it is difficult for people to realize I have changed."

Tina said her daughter is making arrangements to drop out of high school, and to study for a GED (General Educational Development) test.

"Kristen's goal is to be employed for a program which counsels young people involved with chemical dependency," the mother said. "I am so proud of how far she has come and how she wants to share her story in hopes it will be an inspiration to others who feel they are at the end of the rope."

"My mom saved my life," Kristen said. "My biggest fear was that my mom would not be there, that she would not support me after all the terrible things I did."

Tina softly added, "We are a mom-and-daughter team. And we take each day, one-by-one. We are going to make it."

Dale Huffman wants your suggestions and story ideas. He'd like to share a story about you, your family, or a friend that you find touching or humorous. This column is for you. Got a tale about your child? Have you seen the works of a good Samaritan? Do you want to share a special day coming up in your life? Send e-mail to dhuffman@DaytonDailyNews.com or write to Dale at 45 S. Ludlow St., Dayton, OH 45402. (937) 225-2272.

- Caption: Kristin [REDACTED] 16, has turned her life around with help from a program called Kids Helping Kids in Milford. Photo by Jim Witmer
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