

'I had a second chance'

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Document Text

The drinking started for Grant Nations when he was about 10 years old. He said he was trying to gain acceptance from his peers.

"Then after that, I liked it," Nations said.

Eventually, he was drinking, smoking marijuana, sniffing inhalants and abusing over-the-counter medicines.

So his parents checked him into the Step Inc. program for alcoholics. He was just 14.

"I didn't want to go," Nations said. It was eight months into the program, which operates similar to the Straight Inc. program, that he finally realized he had a problem.

Now, Nations talks to teenagers about his experience.

The Kiwanis Club of Tampa gave Nations, a Chamberlain High School senior, its 11th annual youth leadership award Wednesday. More than 100 club members and their guests attended the luncheon at the Riverside Hotel in downtown Tampa.

Nations was chosen because of his "strong commitment to leading other young people in the right direction, exhibited by his active volunteer work" in Tampa, said Kiwanis member Bob Lewis.

Nations' guidance counselor, Sandra Schmidt, nominated him for the award. "Grant made some wise choices" when he chose his friends at Chamberlain, she said.

His parents, Glen and Susan Nations, also came to the luncheon. Grant thanked them for their role in changing his life.

"I really had no earthly idea that what I'd been through was going to affect so many people," Nations told the group. "I used to be a follower. I used to envy the people who could lead."

He has spoken about his addiction at events sponsored by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He also has talked at Students Against Driving Drunk assemblies at his school and at Buchanan Junior High School.

The Step program is "very tough," Nations said. Counselors are all graduates of the program. Sessions are 12 hours long each day.

"Until you prove yourself, you're not even allowed to go to school," he said. "All your privileges are taken away" and gradually given back. If someone is caught drinking or using drugs, privileges are again revoked.

Nations spent 19 months in the program. The last six months were a follow-up period. It was similar to prison because "you can't get away," he said.

He was taken completely off drugs, which "wasn't so bad," Nations said. "You had only yourself, and you had to deal with what was coming."

After his treatment, Nations played football and baseball at Chamberlain. In 1991-92, he was named the school's Male Athlete of the Year.

He earned a 4.0 grade-point average and joined many student organizations, including the National Honor Society, Student Council, the Science Academic Society and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Nations will attend Baylor University this fall. He will major in business administration.

Peer pressure is "not that big a deal after all," Nations said. "I haven't drank in 3 1/2 years, and no one has ridiculed me. You don't have to drink to be popular.

"I had a second chance. They (the kids he talks to) may not have a second chance."

The club also recognized Curtis Frazier for his work with Tampa youth in the YMCA/Tampa Housing Authority sports program. Frazier served time in prison in 1988.

After his release, Frazier became a counselor for Young Life Urban Ministries. In 1991, he rescued three children from a burning house in West Tampa.

Frazier now counsels children on how to stay away from a life of crime.

Frazier was given a \$100 savings bond, and Nations was awarded a \$250 check.

[Illustration]

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO; Caption: Grant Nations, a Chamberlain High School senior, received the Kiwanis Club of Tampa's annual youth leadership award.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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