

## National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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My dad and I went through a rough patch from 2007 to 2010. During that time, my dad was working in the labor union. Due to his lack of education, all he knew was crime and work; when the Chrysler plants started filing for bankruptcy and laying their workers off, he turned back to the only other way he knew how to provide for his family. Seeing a lot at a young age, I learned to pay attention to my surroundings fast; my dad always told me to get an education. Forced to move to Rockford, Illinois, 5 hours away to the closets reaming Chrysler factory and maintaining two homes safety was never a priority to him. I've seen him get electrocuted, limbs get smashed, almost going through amputation from cuts, getting burned and much more.

My father moving caused me to live with my mother full time. Being a single mother in college raising two kids by herself and still putting food on the table was a lot to balance. As years went on, my mother graduated from St. Louis community college with her Estheticians degree. Fresh out of college, trying to start and maintain a business and working seven days a week, she never had time for much of anything but church. She also used to say to me, "Without an education, your life will only be hard." In 2019 my mother's hard work successfully paid off when she opened up two business locations, seeing both of my parent's work hard for what they wanted, it became natural to me.

Over the last five years everything my parents told me went out the window. I got tired of asking them for money they didn't have; I felt like I was taking from my on family. Only 13, too young to get a job I turned to the only thing I knew, crime. Within three months I was arrested and taken to juvenile and sentenced to a 2-month residential program.

My behaviors got worse, by 14 I had been on house arrest, 2 juveniles, on the news, and sent to another program for troubled youth called Division of Youth Services (DYS). I was there for 10 months, once released I was told I'm still a ward of the state and was assigned a service coordinator, which is a parole officer for juveniles. I was told to see him once a week, call him 3 times a week, and if any violations accrue, I can be sent back and possibly revoked.

Still, stuck in my ways, within three weeks of me being released I was back in the life of crime, by a month I was on the run. Caught and sent back to DHS with new charges my release was revoked, and I stayed for another 10 months. Once I was released again, I was 16 with a bad label on my name trying to change my life around, but known in my community, no jobs would hire me. Tired of being patient I went back to what I knew best, fast money. I started to go back to school to work on my Hi-SET. One day, while in class my service coordinator said he wanted to talk with me, he took me to a room and there I was greeted by my father and a detective. I was questioned about a home invasion, robbery and shooting. After that day something clicked in me; I need to change my life but still with no job I started doing little crimes for money. On January 24th I was arrested and charged with breaking into a police vehicle and stealing 2 guns, sent back to juvenile while waiting for my court date my lawyer had told me they want to charge me as an adult. Soon after, covid-19 hit I was offered a deal to go back to DHS, taking the pied deal I agreed to go back, but this time I'd stay until my 18th birthday.

Working on changing my life for good I want to thank the OSHA course the most, completing my General Industry class taught me a lot about work environments, PPE, HIPPA, Safe driving, most importantly safety and what rights I have as a worker. The OSHA course is a major accomplishment in my life that has helped me take one big step into success. Already helping me more than I ever imagined I want to thank everyone in the OSHA foundation for teaching me safety and giving me motivation and inspiration to accomplish my dreams and be a young successful man this card means everything to me I plan taking my courses soon thank you for changing my life.

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