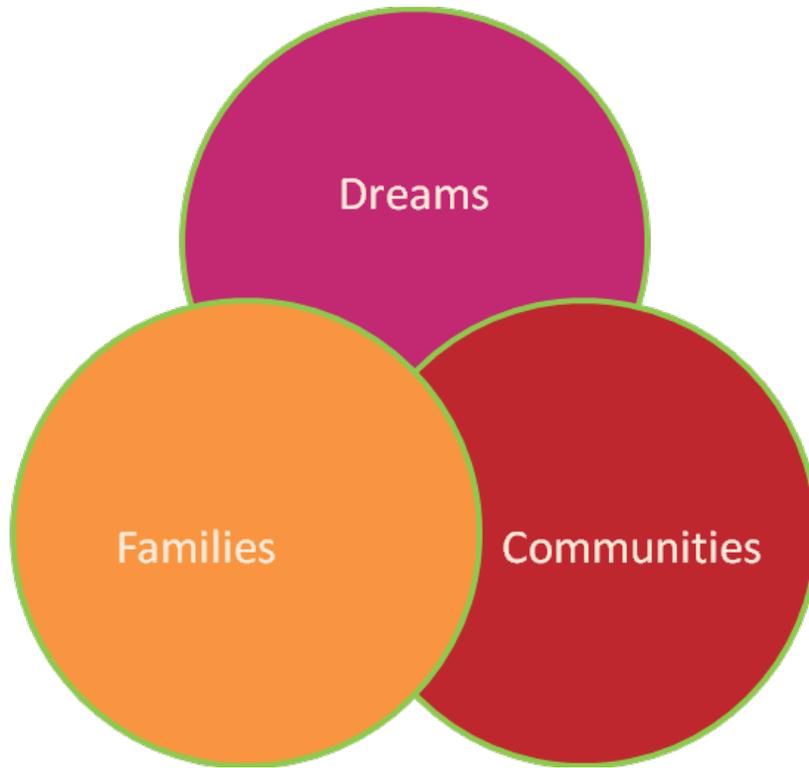


SEEDS SOWN



A Story of Hope

Lexus was one of the first students to enter the Cup of Hope Mentoring Program. When she came to us Lexus guardians shared that the year prior she had failed every class in the last semester and they didn't know what else to do. After meeting with Lexus and her guardians to discuss the expectations of the program, we began seeing Lexus twice per week. After 5 months of being in the mentoring program, 1-2 times per week, Lexus has improved her grades by 40% and is no longer failing in every class.



"I love coming to Seed of Hope because I have someone to help me and someone to talk to." Her mentor Jacquelynne says, "it is so exciting to see the kids working on goals and helping each other. Working with Mrs. Young & Mrs. Barnes has taught me so much. They help the kids understand why they need to do certain things instead of just making them do it."

~Lexus Tharpe

SAVED BY HOPE

Well, first off, it's a second family to me. Also, Seed of Hope isn't just a place to go for fun; it's also a place to go for comfort and advice when I feel like going crazy. I got to the point where I just was ready to give up on my family, friends, and school, but once I joined Seed of Hope I received the love and comfort I thought I couldn't receive anywhere else. I have been through ups and downs, but I still made it. Now that I've been a part of Hope Girls for a whole year, I feel like I finally found a place where I belong and where people love and care about me. I'm a very shy person and usually no matter how much I try, I just can't see myself opening up to anybody and letting them in to try and help me.

Hope Girls opened the door to new experiences and it allowed me to be able to trust someone enough to let them in and help me and keep me from hurting not only others, but most importantly, myself. When someone gives you that type of comfort it's just hard not to feel loved and wanted. Before I joined Seed of Hope I had very low self esteem and I didn't really think much of myself at all. I used to hate myself and how I looked. But at Seed of Hope, I was surrounded by people who loved me and constantly told me I was beautiful. And then it dawned on me "I am beautiful." Ever since then, I haven't had low self-esteem. I was put in the magazine for February's Glamour Girl. I thought if I was good enough to be in a magazine, I'm beautiful enough for anybody! I learned to love myself and I owe it all to Seed of Hope. I feel like the Seed was planted in me and out came a beautiful girl with hope and now that I have it I can plant the seed of hope in others.

- *Sierra*

THEN



NOW

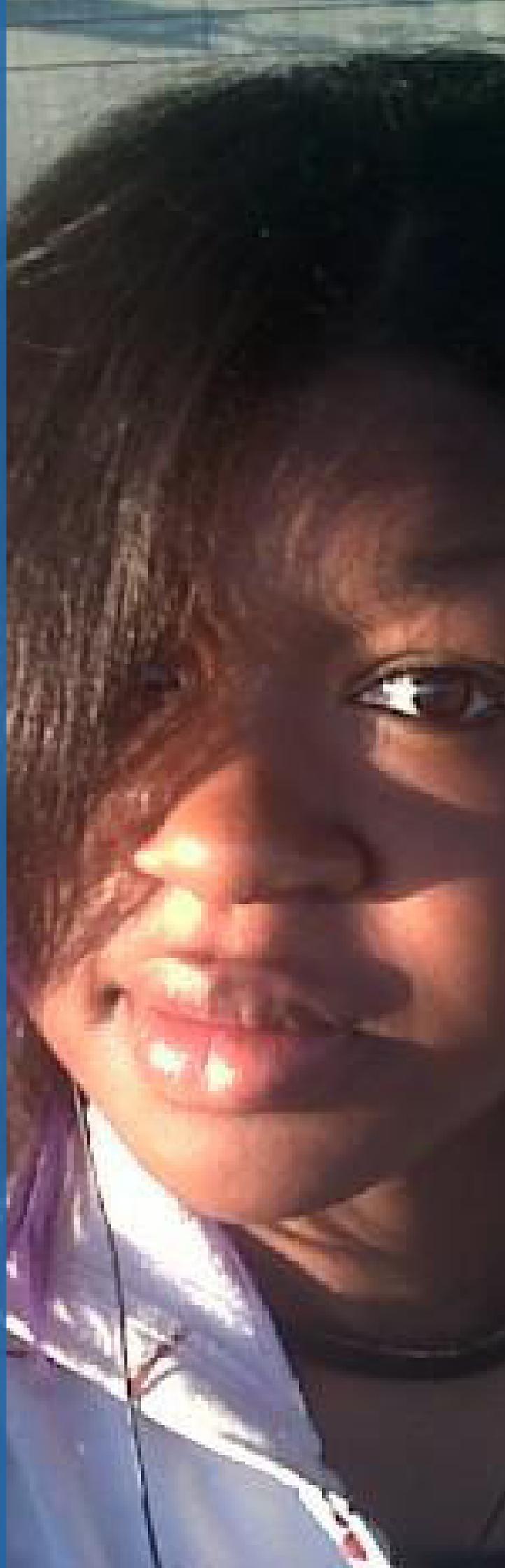


A STORY OF HOPE

Ever since my grandma passed away and I witnessed her death, I had no hope in me. That was a fear I wish never happened. I looked up to her, the woman who raised me, is now gone. I've been depressed, I had hate inside me, I was always angry, and felt so lonely. I always would say to myself that I will do things for my grandma, to make her smile, but I really never did. I got into a lot of trouble, doing things I'm not supposed to do.

My best friend Fierra came to me and told me about this program called Seed of Hope Foundation. The most important event I ever went to was the self-esteem workshop and the things they talked about was everything I was going through. Through the whole session, I was smiling and thanking Fierra for inviting me to Seed of Hope Foundation. Every time I step in the door of "Seed of Hope" I'm happy, always with a smile on my face, and I know there's hope in this place. I always want to continue going to "Seed of Hope" because I know they will help me on the right path of success and happiness. When I hit that door, there is faith. I THANK "Seed of Hope" because of them I feel hope again, I'm getting good grades, and always thinking positive. As they say, I know I will succeed because the seed has been sown.

~ Dazjhane Washington



A STORY OF HOPE

Imagine waking up in the most comfortable bed that you can imagine. Your head sunken into a huge, fluffy pillow, with the warmest cover you can think of. Imagine waking up to your favorite breakfast at the foot of your bed. You don't even have to get out of bed! You can just wake up in the most comfortable bed that was ever invented, with the meal of your choice.

Now imagine after you eat your favorite breakfast, and get dressed in the finest suit that you have, and then stepping outside for work and getting into the car of your choosing. The inside of the car has that new car smell that you love so dearly, and it looks as if you just brought it off the lot. Everything is going wonderful this morning, and then you drive out of the garage, and veer onto the street and next thing you know, BAM! A semi-truck crashes into your car and leaves you halfway dead in the driver's seat. This is what my experience was like.

At first, when I first began using drugs, it was like heaven. Every time I would get high I felt like I was right there in heaven. I felt as if nothing could touch me, and that I ruled the world. Silly of me to think that I would never stop using, that my reign as "king" would never come to an end. I felt as if I was in a movie, and I was the lead actor of course. I would walk down the street with my two "friends" whose name I won't mention for privacy

At first, when I first began using drugs, it was like heaven.

issues, and I would talk in a British accent. I would turn to my friends, high as a cloud, speaking in that accent and I would say, "Oh, you peasant! I am bloody king! I rule this world!" Small note here, I'm African-American, far from being a British king. And I would talk that way for a while, because like I said, when I was high, I felt as if I ruled the world! But I didn't. And of course the time came when my "reign" as "king" had to come to a bloody end!

We all should be familiar with the saying, "what goes up must come down." That's exactly what using drugs are like. You're up for a while. But you know that eventually you're going to come down. Me, I came down when I was suspended from school for smoking on school property! The thought that was going through my head to make me think that I could use on school property was obviously a very dumb one. And my mom, the most caring woman that she is, and also an active member in Seed of Hope, changed my life. She wasn't going to let an "I'm sorry" fly, or any excuses pop up, no way. She told me she was going to do anything to get me some help, and lord knows that is what she

did! The second day of my suspension, I was woken up at 6:00 am! There was a Southwest airline bag packed with all of my clothes, and my mom made me carry it to the car, and we both started towards our journey to Rosecrance, a rehabilitation facility. We got there and I found out that I would be staying there, not for a couple days, but a full month! I thought my mom was crazy for making me do this! But little did I know she was getting me the help in which I desperately needed.

I was only at Rosecrance for eighteen days before they "asked" me to leave treatment. You know, they sent me down to the basketball court and while I was down there they packed my bag without me even knowing! And then "asked" me to leave treatment. I thought when you were asked to do something you got a choice in the answer. Not with those people. But it was whatever, I went on and got in the car, where my mom, Gwendolyn Young, gave me a long lecture and told me how she was full, not in the sense that she ate too much either. And she said, "I hope you are prepared for when you get home. Welcome to the Young Rehabilitation." Gulp! I didn't like the sound of that at all. She gave a slight chuckle and then said to me, "Honey, if you thought Rosecrance was

bad...wait until you get into the Young Rehab." I knew that I was in for a treat! Ha! Not at all.

It only took me and my mom about two days to realize that the Young Rehab had me making more progress than Rosecrance. And I had been at Rosecrance for three weeks! We figured it was because my mom was doing this out of love, whereas Rosecrance was doing it for the checks. My mom put me on a tight schedule and somewhat excluded me from the outside world, but you know what? It is the best thing my mom could have ever done for me, and I thank her for it dearly. If it wasn't for my mom, and Seed of Hope of course, I would probably still be out using everyday, and talking in those silly British accents of mine. Thank God that's over! At the end of the day if you really want to know what my experience was like, it was an emotional rollercoaster, which I'm sure everybody has been on at least once in their lives. But I can truly say that it was rollercoaster that I needed to ride to learn a valuable lesson in my life. And now I will remain drug-free for as long as I live. Thank you for taking time out of your day to read my story. I appreciate all of you.