

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Growing up exposed to the use of alcohol and the underage drinking around me had me focused on not waiting to do that. High school is very good at peer pressuring those of us with mindsets to not do certain things, into them. I've seen many of my friends go down that path. Once the people you hang out with begin to do these types of things it's challenging to not join in. Underage drinking is a great example of this and is something that often occurs. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because of the focus it puts on me towards underage drinking and why it is necessary to avoid.

The statistics and more show that it brings nothing good forth. Not only does Mariah's Challenge include such things, but also how to live a healthier adolescent lifestyle. Once looking into Mariah's Challenge, it becomes evident that there is so much to learn and gain. I have found a new focus to stay on the right track and live the healthiest lifestyle as an adolescent. Staying on the right track is often hard, but with the help of Mariah's Challenge, it is easy to be reminded how much more important it is to stay on track.

There are many and will always be underage drinking, however I believe that the light that is being shed upon the topic because of Mariah's Challenge is incredible. Everyone goes through phases that will test their determination to stay on the good path. More often than not, it is more difficult to do so. Underage drinking is something that used to pressure others into trying something new. From there, it opens a door into other possibilities. Once vulnerability is shown,

it is downhill from there. The amount of people "responsible" drinking underage is slim to none. The main idea is to drink as much as possible for "a good time."

Although these "good times" are often talked about and are what can decide if you fit in or not, Mariah's Challenge shows that that is only a path towards destruction. The long term effects are far more concerning than fitting in. Those who value their health know that underage drinking is not for them. However this may be the case, there are still so many who want to live that healthy lifestyle and do not understand that the alcohol is inhibiting just that. Mariah's Challenge makes it known and is a great resource to find something like that out.

In conclusion, Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in a few ways. It has helped me understand even more that I do not want to take that path. It has also shown me what it is like to live a healthy lifestyle as an adolescent and that that is what is important for my future. This program is a great way to share why underage drinking isn't healthy and able to aid in facts to back up to friends why one would not participate.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Growing up in a small community such as Butte, Montana; alcohol and drugs have been a major problem in our community and schools. The story of Mariah McCarhty has been a major influence in my life that keeps me away from drugs and alcohol. The first time I ever heard of her story, I was only in 6th grade. I didn't really think much of it because I was only 12 years old at the time. As I got older and listened to the story more, I started to realize how it's impacting my life and also my community. Now as a senior in high school, I have had to make tough decisions that will better myself as a person. I rarely go out to parties, instead I spend time with my family and closest friends. Even when I do go to a party, I offer rides home to people who shouldn't be driving home, even if they live just down the street. Accepting Mariah's Challenge has been one of the most difficult challenges for me since I entered Butte High School. I say difficult because there are always temptations from friends, people always that it's high school (a time to party and have fun), and from both friends and family when they tell you that You Only Live Once so enjoy it. Honestly Mariah's Challenge has scared me to where if I am with someone who has been drinking and won't let me drive us home, I will force them inside that house and will call for a ride or even walk home if I need to. I constantly hear these stories that happen all over the country of people dying or getting severely hurt from drunk drivers. Mariah's Challenge and all those other stories are the reasons why I would rather choose time with my 3-4 friends and family rather than party and drink with the 30+ plus kids that I sometimes hangout with. I am 18 years old and have never taken a sip of alcohol and plan to keep that title until I am 21 or even longer.

March 31, 2023

“How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life”

From a young age, my parents have instilled in me to not drink alcohol or put any other harmful substances in my body. I believe that this is why it has been fairly easy for me to live by Mariah's Challenge. Since I had made that choice many years ago, I was already set on standing my ground, keeping my high standards, and refraining from drinking. I have seen this choice impact my life for the better on countless occasions. I have also seen the impacts on those who do the opposite, which only strengthens my decision to avoid alcohol and other substances.

For example, I have heard many stories at school of near-death experiences related to drinking which led to irresponsible choices. These stories terrify me almost as much as they terrified the people involved. But I am comforted in knowing that because of Mariah's Challenge and my decision to not drink, I do not have to experience this fear first-hand. I am able to live my life without the fear of losing control of my own thoughts and actions. This Challenge has enabled me to accomplish great things in my life through both my athletic and academic activities. I know the rewards of living this Challenge will continue to be made apparent throughout my entire life. I also know that I would not even be close to the person I am today without living Mariah's Challenge.

This Challenge has given me the motivation and strength to keep my standards high and continue to dream of big things that I can accomplish in my future. By living Mariah's Challenge, I have been able to think and act at my highest level that continues to propel me forward each day. There is nothing holding me back from all that I can accomplish in life when I refrain from drinking as well as being anywhere near alcohol. This Challenge has changed my outlook on life, helping me to realize that the world is mine for the taking if I'm willing to make the right choices and work for it with all that I have. I strongly believe that all my goals in life, some that I have already accomplished, are only attainable by living by Mariah's Challenge. Additionally, I know that this Challenge is much more than just a challenge.

To me, Mariah's Challenge is much more than a challenge, as it is explicitly stated. Rather, it is a way of life. It is a way to keep myself accountable for my actions and my choices. It is a lifestyle that I know will help me accomplish all that I have ever dreamed of accomplishing. One of my biggest dreams I have had all my life, is my dream of becoming an elementary school teacher, and one of my goals when I get there is to encourage my own students to live by Mariah's Challenge. I hope to encourage them to live this Challenge in hopes that it will change their lives just as it has changed mine.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I accepted Mariah’s Challenge when I was going into my freshman year of high school. I have never been into alcohol as long as I can remember. Unfortunately, at an early age I learned what alcohol can do to your body and just a person in general. My grandpa passed away due to liver cirrhosis if you do not know what that is it is a chronic liver damage from a variety of causes leading up to scarring and liver failure causing of potential death. Most common with alcohol abuse. My Grandpa passed away due to liver cirrhosis, it was the night of my dance recital; I was six years old not completely understanding what was happening after watching my mom and family members break down into tears and my dad telling me that one of the guys that I looked up to the most was not here anymore, the guy known as Mapes, the man everyone new, the one who picked me up from school, took me fishing, and many more other things. For only being so little and trying to figure it out. Especially knowing that I was never going to see or talk to him ever again. I still do not get to this day why he would put himself in that predicament. He still would have had so much life left. Me becoming older and understanding what happened made me take it in a completely unfamiliar perspective of what I feel for alcoholism. It showed me I do not want that to be me and do that at all, and most likely ever drinking. This isn't the only thing either that made me have such a strong feeling for alcoholism. My uncle passed away from a drunk driver when I was a baby and alcoholism is a problem in my mom and dad's side of the family. I really started considering it going into my 8th grade year when I was introduced to TIP. Learning about all the things and especially Mariah’s story. Hearing Leo McCarthy, Mariah’s dad tells us the story about his daughter made me think even more and it scared me in an effective way that alcoholism is really a serious thing, that’s when I knew my genuine decision of what I wanted. My decision was that I accepted the Mariah’s Challenge going into my first year of high school, and I still am till this day, and I am a senior in high school.”

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Hello! My name is Emma Meadow and I am currently a Senior at Butte High School. I plan to attend college at University of Montana and Major in Game Design and Interactive Media. I first heard of Mariah's Challenge back in 5th grade at Whittier Elementary School. We had an assembly one day and a guest speaker came in to tell us Mariah's story. I really paid attention to her story because of how heartbreaking it was. I never wanted to be around people who were intoxicated, and I was always proud of myself for having never tried alcohol.

Mariah's Challenge made me take a second look at my surroundings. It gave me a glimpse of the person I never wanted to be. It also gave me a look at the person I genuinely wanted to be as well. I have taken the pledge to Mariah's Challenge and vow to never get into the vehicle of an intoxicated driver. I pledge to always be responsible with alcohol when I am 21 years old. I also pledge to be a good role model for the next generation and help break the cycle of underage drinking.

I believe that breaking the cycle of underage drinking is super important. I live in a town where at every corner you turn, there's a bar. As a young adult, I have pledged to stay away from these places until I am 21 years old. When I am 21 years old too, I will drink responsibly. I hope to see a future in Butte and others places where underage drinking is not a problem, and our loved ones are safe from people who do not follow the law.

Mariah's Challenge has motivated me to never give in to peer pressure and to never accept alcohol while under the age of 21. Thank you for motivating me to stay alcohol free my whole life. This will be a pledge I will keep in my heart for the rest of my days. Thank you.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

The use of persuasion, influence, or intimidation to make someone do something. The ability of a person to manipulate another into completing an action, typically one outside of their comfort zone. The capability of someone to disrupt the thinking of another, resulting in their participation in tasks unrelated to usual behaviors. All of these define peer pressure and how Mariah's Challenge has changed my life for the better.

Peer pressure does just this to you. It interrupts a person's regular action or moral pattern, leading them to engage in activities different than those involved in their typical lifestyle. While peer pressure can be beneficial in life, it can also create chaos from negativity. It can lead people to actions that are illegal or dangerous. In Butte, Montana, it commonly leads teenagers to drinking.

Statistics show that 29% of teens participate in underage drinking. This means that nearly one out of every three teenagers have taken part in drinking alcohol. One out of every three of my classmates have participated in underage drinking. When an action, legal or illegal, is commonly participated in around you, it becomes the new normal. The action no longer sticks out as weird or absurd as it is completed on a regular basis. Along with this concept, drinking as a high school student in Butte no longer carries a negative stigma, instead it is a regularly participated in activity. Unfortunately, in this community, abstaining from underage drinking is a challenge. It is difficult to oppose the normal and stand against peer pressure to participate.

Mariah's Challenge makes abstinence from drinking more than possible. It provides support to students like myself who are constantly faced with pressures from other peers. The program has given me the opportunity to make the community I live in a safer and a more positive place. In addition, it has led me to find a group of students who share my values, support

my choices, and do not pressure me into possible dangerous activities that are outside of my comfort zone.

The message of Mariah's Challenge has always been one of inspiration to me. It has given me the strength to continue abstaining from underage drinking, even when those around me did not necessarily carry the same belief on the subject. It has given me a place where I can stand behind my choices in a positive manner and a desire to make my community a safer environment. Mariah's Challenge is so much more than its story, it is a reason for choosing abstinence from drinking and a way for that choice to always seem possible.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has guided my life into a favorable direction. I have learned many lessons that will be crucial for my future. My choice to be alcohol and drug free have caused me to be a better student, athlete, and human. Mariah's challenge has made me a better person and I am eternally grateful for organization. Mariah's Challenge has helped me navigate through my high school years, and I know the attributes gained will help guide me throughout my adult life.

During my freshman year of high school, I was constantly feeling left out. I felt as if I was a misfit; however, it is just the opposite. One particular moment comes to mind: I was sitting at home, among my family, exploring the new feature Snapchat added. It was a feature that includes seeing all of your friends' locations at all times. I would stare at my phone seeing all of their avatars together. My heart would sink and would once again be left completely distraught. I knew I needed to channel my frustration into other, more productive, activities during these emotional times, so I became a Friday and Saturday night regular at the Maroon Activity Center, shooting my feelings away. It turned out to be the greatest gift I could have asked for. Unknowingly, it prepared me for my future and molded me into the person I am today. I did not understand this my freshman year, however, it is clear today that being exiled by my peers turned me into the great human I am today.

While I continue to see success on the court, I am beginning to realize that the actions made off the court are the most rewarding. I deeply believe that it is not the wins and losses that define you– it is the qualitative attributes we possess and the impact we have on others. By staying alcohol and drug free throughout high school, I have gained a mature outlook on situations. I have begun to understand the impact relationships have on life, and value and cherish them. I wish younger me could have seen into the vision of the path my life would take.

Thankfully, I do see my vision now, and I am the conductor of my own life. I can guide my own path in the direction I want it to go. When other people declare their opinions onto me, I have the satisfaction of knowing it does not matter. I believe my life is on a path toward success, and Mariah's Challenge played a large role in driving my success. It has taught me I do not

need to be like everyone else. Mariah's Challenge has given me a different perspective that being different is not a bad thing. In reality, being different from others is something that deserves to be celebrated. You cannot be great if you stay hidden in the pack.

I have come to understand that it is the qualitative attributes we possess that are the most important in life--the impact we have on others, the decisions we make, and the ability to be a leader even when it is hard. I believe I am on track to make a difference in my lifetime, and Mariah's Challenge has inspired me to be different. In fact, I aspire to be different; I want to be the one who stands out, speaks up when needed, and makes a positive impact on my life and others. Overcoming the challenges I have encountered has made me believe anything in this lifetime can be possible. We only have one life, and it is essential to make the most of it.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Drinking with the goal of getting drunk is something that has, unfortunately, been normalized not only in Butte, but almost everywhere in the United States. It is heartbreaking that teens have become so attracted to the party scene and drinking regularly. The results can be devastating, which is shared so powerfully through Mariah's story. Her life was lost because of the irresponsible and selfish act of another. Her loss is felt everyday by her family, her friends and this close knit community of Butte.

As a graduating senior I can proudly say that I have never tried alcohol as I have seen how it has impacted my peers and my community. My parents have raised me to understand that alcohol can impair my body and mind, and that drunkenness can be harmful not just for me, but those around me. I encourage my peers to abstain from alcohol through my own example as well as through conversations.

I am thankful for Mariah's Challenge and how it is bringing education to the youth of our community and encouraging wise and safe decision making. Through Mariah's Challenge me and my peers are being challenged not to follow what culture says is ok, but rather be bold in doing what is right. As a generation we must lock arms with one another and inspire each other to live by this challenge and make this world better.

As I enter college this fall I will continue to keep Mariah's Challenge before me and make choices that will not only be good for me, but benefit others. I will continue to accept the challenge of refraining from underage drinking or being in a vehicle with anyone who has been drinking. Mariah's life mattered and I can honor her legacy by living this way.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Throughout my younger life, I was around alcohol with my family during holidays, out camping or at special occasions. It always seemed that any function we went to as a family, there was always alcohol. To some people, this may be normal. But I always sat and watched the change in people and witnessed how alcohol affected them and how they acted so differently from when they were sober. I did not like this feeling and did not like to be around people who were drinking.

I have seen alcohol ruin many lives and many of my family members' lives. My Grandma lost her brother to alcoholism, and I remember it being very hard on her and her other siblings. My mom also had an uncle, who died from alcoholism. The dynamics of the family are forever changed by the death of a loved one. It is hard to sit and watch someone destroy their lives or other lives just by drinking. Not only does it lead to emotional problems within the family but it also causes health problems for the individual. Alcoholism affects everyone around you.

My mom was also hit by a drunk driver when she was 16. Thankfully, there were no major injuries, but she still suffers from back problems because of it. I would not want to drink and drive knowing that an accident could have such an impact on people and their loved ones and destroy lives.

Alcohol has taken people away from families and it splits families up. Alcohol causes too many problems and it just isn't worth it. Both sides of my family drink, and I know a few of them drink and drive. My parents would drink when they were younger and it caused them to have many arguments and fights. I believe it ultimately ended their marriage.

When I entered Junior High, I decided to take the challenge because I did not want to end up drinking or driving drunk and ruin anyone's lives or have it affect my family. Unfortunately, many of my friends decided not to accept the challenge and a few of them have made poor decisions and have had consequences because of drinking. Taking this challenge has allowed me to focus on my high school career and enjoy the activities that I set out to accomplish. I played Hockey until I was in 8th grade and then my freshman year, I tried out for the golf team and made the team! I have advanced in my high school golf career and believe I wouldn't be where I am today, if I were to have chosen to drink. I enjoy many things and love to draw and to create art as well. I have a bright future ahead of me and I thank Mariah's Challenge for a huge part of that because of the impact of her story and how the challenge helped to reinforce my decision. I took the challenge and chose to live and enjoy my life and not have it ruined by drinking. And as I go on through life, the story of Mariah and the challenge will always be in the forefront of my decision making.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

From a young age, I was always told not to do drugs or alcohol by my parents and many people I looked up to, so I took that to heart and promised myself that I wouldn't do any drugs and wouldn't drink underage. Despite growing up around alcohol because my parents owned a brewery, I had complete disinterest in drinking. Then Leo McCarthy spoke at East Middle School about the tragic event that shocked Butte, and that cemented my promise to stay away from drugs and alcohol. And that promise has blessed my life by keeping all the cons that come with underage drinking out of my life.

Making that promise and accepting Mariah's Challenge has helped me be able to look in a mirror and be proud of the person staring back at me. I have been able to make amazing friends who don't do any kind of drugs or alcohol. I have been able to maintain a 4.0 GPA throughout high school. I have been able to stay as healthy as possible for my sports teams because I want to be held accountable. I have been able to help my community with community service. If I had picked up a bottle of alcohol, there's a chance that none of that would be true.

Mariah's Challenge has had a positive impact on the city of Butte and accepting the challenge has given me the best possible path in life. Mariah's Challenge has given me a legitimate reason to deny peer pressure, and it has allowed me to not worry about what people think about me not doing the "cool" thing. I will strive to teach the morals of Mariah's Challenge to future generations to help create a positive and safe environment for the youth of my communities.

Why did I accept Mariah's Challenge and how did it change my life? I have always taken pride in the fact that I have never drank alcohol or been to a party. Accepting Mariah's challenge meant the world to me because I could demonstrate my abilities to overcome a huge problem in Butte, MT. After hearing about Mariah's challenge, I knew I wanted to make a difference in my community. I would make a difference in my community by preventing others and myself from making the mistake of drinking, especially drinking and driving.

Mariah's challenge inspired me to change our community that it known for drinking. Knowing that a terrible event occurred in my community, it made me realize that anything bad could happen to people because of the mistakes of others. Mariah McCarthy was a girl that was killed because of the mistake of another person to drink and drive. The terrible event that happened to Mariah made me want to make a difference in my community. It pushed me to do TIP and volunteer in Butte. TIP educates young teens that alcohol and drugs have many negative impacts on themselves and their community. TIP will prevent young children from making mistakes with drugs and alcohol in the future. I will continue to make a difference in my community because of Mariah's Challenge.

Mariah's challenge reinforced my vow to myself to never drink because I have seen the actions of people under the influence and the consequences afterwards. My family members drink excessively and I've seen how they act. These actions continued to push my negative thoughts that I have on alcohol. Why would I want to act like that and potentially kill another person because of those actions? Throughout high school I have never seen the appeal in drinking. It is a substance that makes people do bad actions that they would not do when they are not under the influence. Mariah's Challenge will inspire many others to make the same decision that I have made to not drink.

Mariah's challenge will forever change my life for the better. It will continue to remind me to make good decisions when it comes to alcohol and other substances.

March 8, 2023

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

For most of my life I have had the use of addiction all around me. From a very young age I knew all about drugs and alcohol and the effects that it has had on people. My dad was a horrible alcoholic for most of my childhood and my brother was drowning in the lies that drugs will cure all. I participated in my 8th grade year and had the privilege to learn about Mariah. Everyone knows the story, or at least think they do. You see the signs in the hall and just make up assumptions of what one may believe happened. What they don't know is the truth. Mariah's story, the real story tore me up in a way people don't understand. She was a bright and beautiful human being who had so much life ahead of her and was sadly taken by a drunken idiot. From the moment I heard Mariah's challenge I was truly impacted and vowed to take the challenge. I won't lie and say that going through high school without drinking was easy, but I will say I did it and I did it for me not for anyone else. For the longest time I did the challenge to prove to my family I could do it, but I later learned I did it for me. I did it for Mariah, she deserves to have her legacy live on and this challenge has done that. It is something that truly impacted anyone who hears it.

I am not sure why people feel the need or fall under peer pressure to drink alcohol. With all the information available about alcohol's effects on the human brain as well as the human body, I also wonder why in the year 2023, anyone would choose to drink and drive. I have been fortunate to learn about what drinking does to a person. It has helped me stay away from all of it all together. In middle school I first began to understand the story behind Mariah's Challenge. When Leo McCarthy spoke at my middle school, I saw in everyone's eyes the tears and emotions flowing out as the reality of how one poor choice had devastating consequences for our entire community.

Drinking was something I always thought was a rite of passage and men just drank. But in the end, it doesn't have to be. I can't believe that so many people get dragged into drinking because they follow influences of commercials that make alcohol consumption seem appealing and guilt free. This topic has been discussed throughout my adolescence from age 10; it has been stressed at school and at home. I am thankful to the McCarthy family for sharing their story and explaining all the consequences that drinking can cause.

Now that I am preparing to go to college my parents have discussed issues surrounding the pressures that I may run into at my college campus. I'm thankful that they do because I know they care and want the best for me. Their warnings are meant to help me make better choices as they know people who lost their lives due to drinking accidents.

My life as a non-drinker is so much more valuable to me and drinking would not enhance it. I can't think of a better way to have a good time than being sober. Being outdoors and doing things that I love is much more important to me. I have lived my whole life without alcohol and see no reason to choose to do it now. This is why I believe that I am worthy of the Mariah's Challenge scholarship.

Sincerely,

Today is the present. Yesterday is the past. And tomorrow is the future. Although each are temporary and out of our control. The only control we do have is the moment. The moment is powerful and can be the means for great change. Change can come in an instant and it can mean all the difference in the world. That change can be alcohol or substance abuse. Abusing either can change your life in the matter of a second. Not only will your life change, others around you will feel that change too. Mariah's challenge has brought forward my attention on just how important it is to be responsible and now your consequences. Under age drinking or substance use I personally feel is unnecessary. Once you become legal, responsibility needs to be a top priority. Unfortunately we are all human and mistakes and accidents are made. Lives are lost, opportunities are spoiled, and hearts are hurt and left feeling empty. I feel and have felt for all my life not an interest in the drinking or partying crowd. I think feeling this way has given me the quality of being the person I am today. I personally want to succeed without having engaged in those situations at all until I can do so responsibly and in a mature manner. I want to honor Mariah and all the people I do and do not know who have lost their lives or have not been as fortunate because of substance abuse circumstances. We can only change our next choice and not those of others. Protecting ourselves and guiding others is the best we can do. This day in age it is particularly hard to do so. Some may feel it as an escape, some as an addiction, some as a way to fit in and have fun, and for some it is too late. By applying and writing this I try to give a raw depiction of how hard it may be and how I am choosing to live without giving in.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My dad and I have gone on walks around our neighborhood since I was a little girl. We often rotated the route we took. One of our favorites was walking along Blacktail Lane. When we took that route, we walked by the small memorial dedicated to Mariah, which was always visible from my house. I first saw a small wooden cross that was decorated depending on the holiday. I remember when it was switched out for a metal cross with "Mariah's Challenge" written on it. I was glad to see something more permanent to commemorate such an impactful and despairing incident. My dad answered all the questions I had about it and made sure that I knew the dangers of drinking.

In eighth grade, I participated in TIP where a heart-wrenching video about Mariah and her friends and family was shown. It brought me and many of my peers to tears. Of course, I had previously learned about Mariah and the devastating event that occurred. I had seen her memorial and learned all about the dangers of over-drinking. But that video took Mariah's story and made it significantly more personal. It made sure you could connect with the people who love and lost Mariah and made sure that you understood the gravity of putting yourself and others in danger at the hands of alcohol.

Having been born and raised in Butte, I observed that drinking was a large part of the culture. But I hadn't truly grasped the abundance of alcohol usage in Butte, especially with underage kids, until I was in high school myself. Entering high school, I was incredibly determined to stick to Mariah's Challenge. I sat in class and overheard people talk about the parties they went to and how drunk they got. I went to football games and, over time, became very skilled at identifying a drunk person. It was sad to me how many of my peers depended on alcohol to have fun. I am proud to say that I have made it through high school never having been under the influence of any substance nor having been in a vehicle with someone who was.

I am privileged to have grown up without having personally experienced alcohol abuse. My dad never drank in front of me, and my mom talked to me about appropriate alcohol use. I have surrounded myself with friends who are great influences and are very like-minded to me. I am proud to have successfully come this far with Mariah's Challenge and grateful for the wonderful opportunity to reflect on all the good that this challenge has done in my life. Remaining alcohol-free throughout high school has proven to be the best thing I could have done. I can see the world without distortion and truly appreciate all the opportunities I have been given, including Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life

The first time I had ever heard of or saw anything about Mariah's Challenge was in Three Bears Alaska. I saw a jar of pennies that had a Mariah's challenge sticker on it. At the time I wasn't quite sure what any of it meant, I was too young to understand. As I grew older, I started to learn more about it. I remember the T.I.P. lock-in during eighth grade when Leo explained to everyone what Mariah's Challenge is, and why it is so prominent today. I remember that during the T.I.P lock-in, that night is when I decided to fulfill Mariah's Challenge. I told myself that I would stay away from drugs and alcohol. I told myself that it would be easy. Little did I know it would not be easy.

As I went along in high school, I saw more drinking and more drugs, and today, more vaping. The further along I got, the harder it was to refrain. I have never been a fan of it so my definition of "hard to refrain" might be different than someone else's definition of "hard to refrain." In Butte Montana, there is close to nothing for a high schooler to do. Because of this, people use drugs and alcohol to have an enjoyable time. The older that high schoolers get, the more they go out and experience the world. The more they go out in Butte Montana, the more likely they are to drink. The speech that Leo McCarthy gave at the lock-in really convinced me to accept the challenge.

I don't know where I would be without it. I don't know what type of trouble I might've gotten myself into without that speech. That speech alone set me on the right path in life. Accepting Mariah's Challenge gave me tons of opportunities in life that I probably wouldn't have received without it. I will forever be grateful for all the things that Mariah's challenge has done for me.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Entering high school, I promised myself that I would stay away from drinking. I imagine the majority of students going into Butte High tell themselves this, but do not follow through on it. I knew what I wanted, but I did not know if I had the willpower to back up my wishes. Then on October 28, 2007 I saw a tragic consequence of drinking and driving that cemented my promise to avoid drinking for the rest of my time at Butte High School. The memory of my mom waking me up, and telling me about the accident serves, and will continue to serve as all the reason I need to stay true to my promise to Mariah's Challenge and to myself.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways, from the way I live my life, to the way I interact with the community. After the tragedy of October 28th I told myself that I not only needed to make myself better, but I also had to do something to help in the community. In order to meet these goals I joined Mariah's Challenge to strengthen myself and my community, I also joined the group TASC which helps out in the community. As my high school career has progressed Mariah's Challenge has helped me keep my promise and make moral choices, while TASC has given me an opportunity to help out in the community throughout the year. However, without Mariah's Challenge I would not have had the incentive to get involved.

As I move on from Butte High School, I plan to continue to honor my promise to Mariah's Challenge wherever I end up. It will continue to give me the motivation I need to keep my goals on track. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life for the better, and will continue to do so.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because it has provided me the opportunity to be proud of who I am and how I was raised. I realize this is a simple statement, but it is actually very empowering. Because of Mariah's Challenge I do not feel outside pressure to drink in order to have a good time. I know it is okay to just hang around my house with my friends, go bowling, or get a pizza, and I don't have to explain my actions to anyone.

My parents always made it clear that under-aged drinking would not be tolerated in our house, and my three older siblings set good examples by abiding by my parents wishes. I am quite certain that my sister and brothers faced a lot of peer pressure to drink and often had to make excuses why they weren't going to go partying with their friends. Mariah's Challenge has made it much easier for me to resist peer pressure to drink, and it has actually made it somewhat socially acceptable at Butte High to not drink. I have never felt the need to make excuses why I don't drink, and I know a major reason for that is because of the message behind Mariah's Challenge.

Mariah's Challenge has allowed my friends and me to do social activities that do not involve alcohol and not be made to feel different because we didn't drink. Additionally it has given the youth of Butte the chance to think of creative things to do, and hopefully over time this will lead to a change in the culture of drinking in Butte.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship Essay

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's Challenge has truly influenced my life. Because of the positive, overwhelming reactions from the community I am not afraid to stand up for what I believe in, even if that entails turning away from negative peer pressure. I have the courage and strength to help fight against negative peer pressure throughout the community. Mariah's Challenge gave our community something to unite for and a goal to achieve. Unity can be felt across the neighborhoods of Butte because a sense of communal pride has been instilled into the hearts of all citizens. The Challenge has shown me that a community truly can come together to overcome great obstacles in life, and present a positive image for the rest of the nation and world. I now have a greater sense of pride in my hometown because of such great actions from citizens to assist others throughout the community. Mariah's Challenge has offered me goals that will benefit my life as well as the lives of other citizens throughout the state. I now do not need to worry about the possibility of illicit substance use because I have accepted Mariah's Challenge. Other goals in my life, such as attending and graduating from a university, are now more readily attainable because I have chosen to accept the health benefiting guidelines set forth in Mariah's Challenge.

Mariah's Challenge Essay Scholarship

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

On the night of October 27, 2007, I came home around eleven o'clock p.m. I was just about to get into bed when I heard three girls laughing loudly. I looked out my window and saw Valarie Kilmer, Kaitlyn Okrusch, and Mariah McCarthy walking across my front lawn. I looked at my clock, which said eleven thirty p.m., and went to bed. What happened at midnight on October 28, 2007, changed my life forever.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by helping me choose the better road to take in high school. Not many students accept Mariah's Challenge, and I look at them questioningly. It's not that hard to accept a challenge that helps a student better their life in the long run. Many kids may get teased for not drinking in high school and partying with everyone else, but can't all high school students wait until they are twenty-one? I guess not all.

Whenever I think back to that night, I can remember every single detail from when I got home, to when I saw those three girls, the sounds that awoke me, everyone's reaction to seeing who had been hit, the night in the hospital, and, especially, when my mom told me that Mariah had passed away. Not only did I accept Mariah's Challenge before it became a challenge; but now, more than ever, I believe in Mariah's Challenge. Accepting Mariah's Challenge takes much of a student's effort. I know that when I hear of a party, I automatically say no to going to it. I automatically know that nothing in my favor will come out of that party. Accepting Mariah's Challenge has changed my life for the better, and will continue to do so after graduation.

Lastly, I understand this first hand. While driving on October 8, 2008 I was rear-ended by a drunk driver, and thankfully I walked away from this accident.

I accept Mariah's Challenge. Thank you for this wonderful scholarship opportunity.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

First, I would like to start by saying that I don't think accepting Mariah's Challenge has changed my life. I had already made up my mind not to drink at an early age. I do, however, believe that Mariah's Challenge has helped me reinforce my decision not to drink or use illegal substance. It has helped me realize the many things that people "throw away" when they drink or use drugs. It doesn't matter if a person drinks when they are under age or if they are adults. When "most" people drink, it leads to irresponsibility.

My parents have always taught me to strive to be the best that I can be. They always encouraged me to try new things and never give up. They also taught me at a very young age that I am no better than anyone else. However, I am just as good as anyone else. I have tried to live by this and accept things as they are. I try my best to treat others like I want to be treated. Most times, I find myself helping the underdog. I don't like to see anyone hurt.

When I participated in the D.A.R.E. Program in the fifth grade, I learned the consequences of my actions should I decide to drink or use other illegal substance. It is since then that I decided that a drug free life was the choice for me.

When I am with my friends, we always manage to have a good time. And, we have this good time with no alcohol or drugs around. I have come to the realization that I have too much to lose by not using my head. My life and the life of others are much more important to me than being "cool" to my friends. I know who my friends are and I know that I can trust them. I have never allowed peer pressure to dictate my life. I am not going to start now. I am my own person and I realize that it is me that will suffer the consequences should I make that wrong choice.

Mariah's Challenge Essay

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life."

To this day I can still tell you where I was when I heard about Mariah's accident and how shocked I was to think that something like that could happen in Butte. In the news you always hear things like that happening other places, but never Butte and I think that's how a lot of people felt. When it comes to drinking and driving or even things happening to people who are under age and drinking I think a lot of people think to themselves, "O that won't happen to me."

Mariah's Challenge has truly changed my life by making me more aware of the problem we have in Butte and further more in Montana. I knew that underage drinking was happening but no one was doing anything about it and thanks to Mariah's Challenge people have started. Before this happened there was no alternative to going uptown on St. Patty's Day, and now we have somewhere to go that doesn't promote drinking thanks to TASC and Mariah's Challenge. I am more aware of how important being a designated driver for those in my family who are old enough to drink so that something like this doesn't repeat itself. I have seen how this tragedy has effected four families and no one should have to go through that type of pain.

When I hear people talking about Mariah's Challenge I am reminded of a quote by Ghandi, "Be the change you want to see in the world." To me this is what Mariah's Challenge is and what it will accomplish if we all pull together and help the cause.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

-Mahatma Gandhi

I believe that this quote is so true, and I think that this fits the goal of Mariah's Challenge. The way to make a difference in the world is to practice what you preach. When the youth of Butte and the rest of the United States accept the challenge to stop underage drinking and drunk driving, then it will be a brighter future for many generations to come.

Underage drinking and drunk driving is an issue in Butte. It may seem fun but in the end it can have negative consequences. Mariah's death on October 28, 2007, has opened the eyes of many people. It shows how seemingly harmless fun can have drastic effects. This event showed me that I must think before I act. It is just terrible how the people of Butte had to wait for this tragic event to recognize this serious issue.

This challenge has showed me how a small group of people can turn a rallying cry into a powerful inspiration for all. Mariah's Challenge shows how people can have an effect on the future. I would love to see everybody accept this challenge, and I know it will not be easy. I hope to be an example for the future generations of Butte by showing that you do not have to drink to have fun. I am Proud to say that I have accepted Mariah's Challenge and plan on doing so for the rest of my life. I also hope to see others join in the battle against underage drinking and drunk driving.

How Mariah's Challenge has Change My Life

I accepted Mariah's Challenge because alcohol has affected my life in a large way. When I was seven years old my biological father, one night while he was drunk, did things that have changed my whole life. He beat and raped my mother, almost killing her. He was sent to prison for five years for his actions. While in prison, he continued to harass and threaten my mother and us and he received an additional three years for those actions. My mother was afraid of what would happen when he got out of prison and chose to change our names and move to a different city in an attempt to hide from him. My Mother did not like the town we moved to and came back to live in Butte. My father was released in 2006 and is now living in Butte. I have not seen him since he got out nor do I plan to see him.

I'm eighteen years old and still to this day have chosen not to drink because I know how one night of drinking can change your whole life. When I heard about Mariah's Challenge I gladly accepted it. It's sad to lose someone you loved because of one drunken night. I am very thankful to still have my mother in my life. I would not be where I am today if my mother was dead.

Mariah's Challenge gives me a chance to tell people my age that drinking is not the answer. I'm from Butte and teens today say Butte is boring and there nothing to do and that is why they have parties. Some teens don't realize that we can make a change. I'm involved with a lot of things and my favorite is Big Brothers and Big Sisters. I have learned that children in elementary school really do look up to high school students. I enjoy mentoring my little sister at West Elementary School. Being in high school can be a lot of responsibility and one responsibility is that we have to show younger children that drinking is not the answer. We have to show that there is more to life. I have accepted the challenge to make my community a better place and be a role model for both my peers and kids younger than me.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship Application Essay
"How Mariah's Challenge Has Impacted Me"

I never planned on drinking in high school, but when I heard about the institution of Mariah's Challenge, this "plan" became a goal. I knew that this challenge would help me to withstand the peer pressure coming from a town that has a reputation for its rowdy citizens. I have made it a point to refuse alcohol until I am of age, and to never drink and drive. I believe that Mariah's Challenge is helping Butte to overcome its underage drinking problem and will only continue to help, as more and more teens come to the conclusion that I have: drinking does not add anything to your life, that it is not necessary to have fun.

I did not know Mariah very well, except for our participation in a play together, but I was truly touched by her death. The accident shocked me as much as it shocked the entire town, and I continued to think about it for weeks after it happened. Her untimely death inspired me to look at my life and to make it better each and every day, without the use of alcohol. It also reminded me that life is precious and should be cherished because you never know when it could come to an end. Mariah is a real inspiration, and the memory of her terrible accident will hopefully change the outlook on alcohol in Butte and the rest of the state.

Mariah's Challenge has impacted my life by making me see the errors that come with the use of alcohol and how serious they can be. It has showed me that optimism can be found in even the worst of situations, and I really believe that finding a way to turn this horrible thing into something positive, is a miracle. I usually tend to be pessimistic even though I do not have a hard life at all, and thinking of Mariah's Challenge has helped me to look for the positives in my life because I now know that positivity can be found anywhere. This challenge is a great way to make others see what devastation the combination of drinking and driving can bring, as well as the harm in underage drinking. The town's memory of Mariah should stop the inappropriate use of alcohol, in order to heal Butte and make it safe for all of its citizens. This should never have to happen again.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Along with all of the fun and excitement of entering high school come a lot of challenges and pressure. The most obvious pressure is the pressure to drink. We always hear about "peer pressure", but do we really know as a community what it is? The answer is no. There is more pressure out there to drink than any other pressures. The pressure to drink out weighs those of sports, education, and parents combined. It's not a good thing that we have more pressure on us to drink than to do our homework.

In my life I have been pressured to drink on many occasions. When I was a freshman I would always find myself in a party or a cabin where drinking was the main event. I would never participate until the spring of that freshman year. I was out camping with people who I thought were really good friends. They happened to be a couple years older than me, but that didn't seem to matter. When they started drinking they put so much pressure on me to be "cool" that drinking just seemed like the easy thing to do. That ended up being the one of the scariest nights of my life. A forest ranger drove up and caught us drinking. He let us go with a warning and took what he thought was all the Beer. Some other kids hid some beer and started drinking when he left. That forest ranger knew that he did not confiscate all the beer. He walked about 2 miles through the woods and surprised us. He gave M.I.P.s to about 5 kids he saw drinking and let the others, including me, go. That was a turn point in my life.

About 6 months later a tragic event happened in our community. Mariah McCarthy was hit and killed by a drunk driver on October 28th 2007. Many of my best friends were with her that night. I saw how much it hurt them, and realized what drinking and driving can do. Ever since that tragic event I have never drank again. I have still been pressured to drink, but have not. I have made a promise to myself not to drink until I'm 21. Even when I do turn 21 I doubt I will drink. It has done nothing good in my life. I have only seen bad things from it.

Mariah's death has changed the town of Butte. I was in high school before her death, and am in

high school after. I have seen a change in my school. Most all kids in my grade drink with the exception of about five people. When I look at the younger kids I see change. They don't drink at all. They are a new generation of kids. The kids in my school that I consider "cool" have never drank in there life. The sports teams I am on have helped a lot too. We have a great basketball team, but the reason we are great is we have made a promise not to drink. While Mariah's death was a horrible event, I have seen so much good come from it. The community is slowly changing. My life is changed. Going to a catholic school and learning about angles, I know that Mariah is an angle. She is doing so much good for the town of Butte and has opened thousands of eyes.

Mariah's Beautiful Legacy

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because, it has showed me what is really important in life. Also I have never even had as much of a sip of alcohol my whole life. I have always had better things to do with my time. I don't want to have anything to do with people who drink. I also know that drinking doesn't solve anything, because it only hurts you and others in the end. It may seem like your problems will go away but your problems will still be there in the end or even worse then they were before. I also think that people who drink are selfish.

My whole life I was given morals, values, rules, guidance, and love. My parents have always trusted me, because I have always tried following their rules. I also don't see the point in drinking. If people have to drink to look stupid in front of other people to have have fun, then why would I want to fit in that way?

People give into peer pressure because they are desperate for friends. People don't always think about these certain problems such as: why do I have to drink and be like everyone else? If these people do not like me, because I would not drink then maybe they were never my friends in the first place. Also, what if I were to get into trouble would these people help me? Also, how will this change my life? If people did think about the outcomes, then they wouldn't have to learn these lessons.

I have been thinking a lot lately about a lot of things. To start off, I am so thrilled to be here. I have had a lot of obstacles happen to me this year, and even my last three years. Most of the obstacles haven't been good, but they are all things I need to learn from. All the amazing people, adventures, and things that occurred this year have made me grow a lot. It is interesting how one year can change a person so much. I sometimes

think about the beginning of the year, and some days I even look back all the way to my freshman year. When I look back to my Freshman year I remember who my friends were, what I looked like, what I was afraid of, and what I wanted to be different for me this year. I really have grown up a lot. I think a lot of it has something to do with where I live. I have grown to really appreciate Butte, and appreciate the people, and community. Butte is an amazing place. Who would think a little town in Montana would be such a special place to grow up. It has its lows no doubt, but it also has its secrets, special people, history, and cute charm.

Senior year has been different for me. I love all of the new things I have done this year. All the new things I have experienced. All the great people I have met or gotten to know better has changed me for the better. My class has been together for a long time. We all have been through a lot. We all have had our hardships, and we have all helped each other through all of them.

It has made all of us grow together and bond. High school is a strange time in everyone's life. You learn so many new things, and have so many good times and bad times. It is interesting in the least. I think I have grown so much this year. I now know what adults mean when they say they wish they were teens again. It has gone by so fast. I look at my school and I realize no matter what school you go to. It is always the same to everybody because, It breaks some people down, and is brilliant towards others.

It's when we start breaking into our groups, and people change. Then you add romance, and having to make decisions that will shape the rest of your life. Sometimes we can get so wrapped up in high school, that we forget the outside world though. We think things like whose the homecoming queen? or who wins the state championship are

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge is one of the best motivational programs for every student in the community, state, and nation. Mariah's Challenge allows students and members of the community to reflect on this horrific tragedy and, hopefully, learn from the mistakes made on that saddening evening.

Mariah's Challenge has enhanced my life significantly by giving me the strength to say NO to the constant peer pressure of drinking, and even other drugs. Ever since I have been a freshman, I was, and am still, pressured into going to a party to go drink. I refuse to make myself vulnerable by drinking. Mariah's Challenge has encouraged me to influence my friends in making the right choice instead of the irresponsible, illegal choice of drinking. To me, Mariah's Challenge is not just about keeping students away from alcohol, but also away from every illegal drug in the world.

I have worn a Mariah's Challenge bracelet every day since they were given out several years ago. I wear the "I Accept Mariah's Challenge" bracelet to remind me of its purpose and to remind and influence others about the dangers of drinking and driving. Mariah's Challenge has acted as a guide to protect me from drinking and I know for a fact that if this program was not in existence, I may have already drank by now.

I try to influence as many people as I can who are using drugs or alcohol. I tell them that they should quit and explain to them the many dangers and consequences that they create. Mariah's Challenge is a great program and it has helped to make me a better person as I take this long, tough journey through life. I am proud to say that I Accept Mariah's' Challenge.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah McCarthy was not a girl I hung out with or someone I confided in, but she is someone I look up to.

After a rough freshman year, I didn’t have many friends, but there was one thing that brightened almost every school day. A beautiful, laughing girl would smile and say hello whenever I met in her in the hallway. I didn’t know who she was until a heartbreaking text woke me after a long speech and debate meet. I read the forward so nonchalantly until it hit me...I knew these girls.

In the two years since, I have gone through ups and downs, sorrows and joys, love and hate, but most importantly, through Mariah’s Challenge, I have discovered who I am and who I want to be.

I am and will continue to be a woman who is not afraid to stand up for her convictions, a girl who is comfortable in her shoes, and a person who does not regret her past, but learns from it to help her grow.

Mariah's Challenge Essay

It seems as though in the high school "scene," there is still of a problem with students thinking that it is necessary to drink alcohol in order to fit in. Added to the stupidity and the mislead teens, kids are making the decision to drive while they are under the influence. This has been an increasingly disturbing problem for some time now, and needs to be addressed.

Throughout my high school career, I have taken great pride in the fact that I do not drink alcohol. I would be lying if I said it was not difficult. No matter who you are, peer pressure is still a very large influence on any teen's life. I used that pressure for something positive. I am a three year letterman and varsity member of the Butte Central golf and track teams. I am successful in both of these sports due to several things. The one I take the most pride in as a Butte Central athlete, I have stayed strong in my beliefs and did not drink. I know, that there are too many things that are not worth risking just because of drinking. I decided as a freshman, that I would keep my head, "buckle down," and focus on excelling at not only my athletics, but my academics as well. Things such as drinking while in high school would do nothing but get in the way of my dreams and abilities.

Throughout high school, I have been questioned on what is "Butte Tough"? So many people have approached me wondering what it is. If I had to give an example, the first one that would come to my mind would be Mariah's Challenge. Looking back at the community and witnessing how the city of Butte dealt with this tragic situation by banding together to take it head on helps me stay strong. If there is one thing that I have learned from living here in Butte it is this: No matter what happens, you must always be ready and able to get back up, regardless how hard you fall. In addition, there will always be good people there to help you up.

With the sudden and tragic death of Mariah, the community of Butte joined together to stand as one. So many people took this situation and made sure that others would learn from it. As a high school student, dealing with the death of Mariah, it no longer mattered whether you bled Maroon or Purple in the city of Butte. The kids of Butte were all one. We all were affected in some way. The kids of Butte want to make a change; we need to stand out and no longer be simply a statistic.

I am proud to say that I am a part of Mariah's Challenge. Now that I will be going off to college, I still plan on not drinking. Going to college is such a huge step anyone's life. I will not let something like a MIP or DUI ticket get in the way and ruin my future.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship Essay

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

On the night of October 28th, 2007, I was lying in my bed, awake and in miserable pain. I had tonsillectomy surgery two days before. I had hardly slept, ate, or talked for almost three days. As I lay in bed, moaning in pain, it didn't occur to me that I was not the only one lying, moaning in pain. Little did I know, three beautiful young girls I went to school with were in much more pain than I was, at the time. A few minutes later, I received a terrible text telling the story of Mariah, Valarie, and Kaitlyn. I didn't believe it; I thought it was just a senseless, false text someone had made up. How could something like that happen to such intelligent and smart young girls, which I said hello to everyday in the hallways. I went to bed thinking nothing of it. "That couldn't be true. Nothing that terrible could happen in Butte. Not to me, not to people I know," I kept telling myself as I tried to fall asleep.

As I woke up numerous times throughout the night, the scene of the text I had previously read kept repeating in my mind. When I awoke in the morning, the first thing I grabbed was my cell phone. Text messages I had received all night made tears roll down my cheeks. I couldn't believe the story was actually true.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life to not take anything for granted. Family, school, sports, anything I do, I learned to always make the best of it, because I never know when something could change my life forever. Before Mariah's Challenge, I had never drank, been drunk, or been at a party where drinking was involved. After Mariah's Challenge, it made even more sense to me to not get involved in drinking. I will never drink, allow my friends to drink, be around drinking, or get into a vehicle with someone who has been drinking. Mariah's Challenge has made me open my eyes to what could happen and realize to make the best of everything.

“How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I have strong morals and values that I stick to, and drinking is something that has never interested me. I always stick to what I believe in and I do not let others influence my decisions. There is a great number of people my age that binge drink regularly, and also some that drink and drive. I choose not to surround myself by those people. I surround myself with friends that will not pressure me, and have the same beliefs as I do when it comes to underage drinking. I have never been to a party, or even been invited to a party. This is because people know I do not drink, and I am not ashamed or embarrassed to admit it or talk about it. I have family and friends who look up to me for being strong and sticking to my promise to not take part in underage drinking. When I think about the death of Mariah I think, “this did not have to happen, this could have been prevented”, and I want to let people know that drinking and driving is not acceptable. I want to be a good role model for my younger sister and for others who look up to me.

Drinking and driving is happening everywhere and it has caused death and devastation all over the world. It has happened too much in our community and “Mariah's Challenge” is something that has helped influence that too change. I think about how Mariah's life was taken from her and her family, and it truly breaks my heart. Since the death of Mariah I have promised myself I will not drink until I am twenty-one years old, I will never drink and drive, I will never get into a car with someone who has been drinking, and I will always be a good role model. These are all promises that I am going to keep and these are values that are important to me. I look up to Leo McCarthy for turning such a devastating death into something that can have a positive impact on our community. Through “Mariah's Challenge” I have learned the importance of life, and I do not want to risk my life or the life of others by underage drinking or drinking and driving.

I was a sophomore when Mariah McCarthy died. It is something I will never forget. To this day, thinking about how she died gives me the chills all over my body. It not only killed a young girl who did not deserve to die, but it hurt all the people in her life. “Mariah's Challenge” is something that has impacted my life and has made me a stronger individual. It has helped me to stand up for my beliefs about underage drinking, and to not be ashamed to voice my opinions about it. “Mariah's Challenge” is something that has influenced the choices of many people and will continue to throughout the future. This will be a teaching mechanism for many adults who are trying to teach there children the importance of staying away from underage drinking. “Mariah's Challenge” has deeply influenced me and will be a big part of my life forever.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's challenge has had a huge impact on my life; seeing that class go through that much pain was horrifying for me to watch, as my brother was a member of that class. I am always really nervous about my friends drinking and driving or even drinking for that matter. I know that kids will be kids and have parties and go out and drink and most of them drive themselves home after those parties, which puts everyone in danger. I have had a few incidents in my family with my family members having friends that get into accidents because of alcohol. I have also had some friends get into accidents and have to go to the hospital because of alcohol, which is a scary position for anyone. When all it takes is for you to not drink and from experience you do not need to drink to have a good time. My friends and I go out and have a ton of fun without the consumption of alcohol. I also have those few friends that go out and drink and go to parties and I don't understand why they do it and put themselves in that position. I always give my friends the option that if they do go out and drink to call me to come get them so that I know they made it home safely. The idea of teenagers out drinking scares me just because most teenagers don't make the right choices when they are sober let alone under the influence. I wouldn't want to put anyone in that situation but I am only one teenager. I can't make decisions for other people but my choice is to be alcohol free.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in more than one way. The most dramatic way is the following. I remember Mariah as being the "nice eighth grader," when I was a seventh grader. The day I found out she had passed away, after briefly knowing her; I made a promise to myself. The promise was that I would be remembered by many, as I remember her; the girl that didn't judge a book by its cover and didn't talk down to underclassmen. It was a process that took a few years, but now I can say that I have fulfilled and kept that promise to myself. I have made many friends because of this, and I have lost many too. Being the girl that is nice to the underclassmen is not always a good thing, according to my fellow classmates. I've never been one to follow the crowd though. In my opinion being a leader is a great quality to have, and one of the reason's I am one is because of taking Mariah's Challenge.

Another way that Mariah's Challenge has changed my life was by taking the pledge to not drink and drive. I will not be hypocritical and say that I have never done so in my past, but I will say that I never will again. I almost lost my best friend about a year ago to drinking and driving. When those things happen, it changes your outlook on many things. I have many friends and family that do drink and drive and every second that they drive while under the influence it makes you worry. I don't want the people I love to have to live their life worrying about me. So I choose to not drink and drive.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When this tragic event occurred, I was starting 8th grade at the time. It was the morning when I read the newspaper and saw the article about a drinking and driving accident involving three girls. When I found out who passed away, my jaw dropped. I didn't know Mariah personally, but I knew her well enough to actually tear up a bit. This tragic event outraged a city and a family; but as people say, we're Butte tough. This was an event that we have to ask ourselves "how could we have stopped this?" In comes the father of Mariah at a Butte High basketball game to announce the beginning of Mariah's Challenge, a program to stop drunk driving and under-age drinking. Here we are now, 5 years later and still going strong.

My life has changed drastically throughout the years. As a senior in high school, I hear a lot of kids talk about drinking and how much they drank that weekend. I have never taken a sip of alcohol in my life, never have I done illegal drugs in my life, and never WILL I do any of that stuff in my lifetime. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge, my family feels safer about driving at night time. The classic stereotype for people who live outside of the state of Montana thinks we're just a bunch of hicks who drink and drive. Well they truly don't understand that we are a state that bonds together as one and tries to stop this illegal act. Ever since Mariah's Challenge has been in effect, the cases of DUI's has gone down drastically.... The only problems we have now are the people who try to text and drive simultaneously.

In conclusion, I am in full support of the Mariah's Challenge and hope it continues and gets stronger.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

1

 Mariah's Challenge has changed my perspective on life. The Challenge made me take a second look at my surroundings as a whole and see the things I never want to be. Gazing upon the community, all that can be seen is bars, casinos, and families ruined by the bottom of a liquor bottle. Even my family has a long history of alcoholism which has ruined the success of some of the smartest and most kind hearted people I know. When I took the Challenge I was not just taking an oath not to drink and not to do drugs. I was making a commitment to myself and my family to succeed and do something great with my life.

 By staying true to my oath I am able to commit myself to my academics, jobs and athletics. In school I am maintaining a 3.2 GPA. In my athletics I was able to accomplish my goal of being top ten in state for class AA Cross Country. And I am also balancing two jobs where I am learning the trade of a machinist at one and being taught how to work in sales and help the community at the other. If I did not have Mariah's Challenge to inspire me to greatness I would not be where I am today.

How *Mariah's Challenge* Changed My Life

I was in seventh grade when Mariah passed, a year younger than she was herself. A silly *Myspace* bulletin was hastily posted merely an hour after the accident listing the three names of the girls that had been involved. No one really knew what had happened, or why, or how; all we knew was that a drunk driver had made a mistake that would alter the course of those young girls' lives and our own forever.

Never have I really indulged in the so called thrill of alcohol consumption. Most of my family, wonderful people that they are, have gone through (or currently are going through) a serious alcoholic state. Seeing so much struggle and pain in the people I care about steered my path away from the social drinking lifestyle so popular among teenagers.

Even more of a deterrent was the multiple drunken car wrecks I've witnessed within my short life. Rollovers, suicide attempts, and deaths; it's a slap of reality and further hurt every time it happens. When Mariah, Valerie, and Kaitlyn fell victim to a drunk driving accident, it was all the more reason to stay sober. Losing Mariah, seeing those girls' families and friends in such a state of grief and fear made me realize how much one person can really mean to someone else. The thought of doing that to my loved ones, or to someone else's, makes my stomach drop and my throat clench.

Those girls went through Hell and torment unimaginable to most; but something good came out of it all. Awareness. Never has our community of Butte, America, taken notice that we have a problem. Alcohol has been taken too lightly. Perhaps we are a

humble town of drinking Irish folk, but it took the death of a young girl for us to recognize the commonness of drunken driving right in our hometown, and how dangerous it really can be.

That awareness was truly awoken in me when I read the news the morning following the accident. *Mariah's Challenge*, though sparked by tragedy, proved my choice to be sober the best thing I could do for my future. There couldn't be a truer message.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

How Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life, it has affected my life in many ways. For such a thing to happen in such a tight community where drinking is a big problem, it really makes you think, is it worth it? When I hear of my peers and even some of my friends after they get an MIP, they are disappointed in themselves and in their choices. Butte isn’t the most enjoyable town with a lot to do, but it is very close. When tragedies such as this one occur everyone is touched by it, and especially when such a nice young woman’s life is the conclusion of the accident. This challenge has changed my life, I have went through my high school career without a minor in possession and feel I would be a great choice for this scholarship.

6

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Why have I choose not to drink during my high school career? Why did I chose not to do any sorts of drugs? Why did I except Mariah's Challenge? I remember hearing the tragic news of Mariah's death and asking God why did this happen?

As I approached high school I remember seeing and hearing about alcohol and drugs every single day. I took a second to think, "Is that what I want for my life?" I soon learned the answer to my question, no!

As a senior, I hear about all the traumatic events that went on. I couldn't even count how many times I've heard my peers say, "I'm never drinking again!" Yet that next weekend they are out once again.

I hate the feeling of waking up every Saturday morning, having countless text messages about how one of my friends were in an accident, or even very hurt. I've lately been the driver. I pick up friends and bring them to their destination safely. I'm hoping one day my positive behavior will wear off on my peers.

Instead of drinking, I do many other various activities. I have a fun time and that is a hundred percent sober.

Mariah's Challenge has showed me I'm not in it alone. Just because I'm not drinking doesn't mean I'm an outcast. I thank Mariah's Challenge for helping me through high

School. After speaking at a Mariah's Challenge assembly, I felt I could make a difference. I have my friends who drink every weekend ~~now~~ sometimes I just ask, wanna stay in and watch a movie with me.

Mariah's Challenge has had a positive impact on my life and made me take a step up and be myself to my full potential.

THANK YOU!

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

The day I heard the news that a drunk driver one evening hit three teenage girls killing one of them, I was devastated. Those girls were only one school year ahead of me, all close to my age; a very frightening thought. The thought that continuously ran through my head was, "What if that could have been me?" or "What if that had been one of my best friends?" It's so tragic to think things like that happen today and will probably continue to happen.

To prevent similar tragic events happening to me or someone I know I have accepted Mariah's Challenge and have stayed true to it. Mariah's Challenge has moved me to stay a clean respectful person free of any alcohol and has moved me to be proud of my choices. I am be proud of the person that I am today. I look at my fellow peers, who in the past have had an MIP or had issues with drinking, I think to myself "I am so happy to be who I am and make the right decisions." I believe drinking is wrong and dangerous, leading to many accidents like the death of young Mariah. I am hoping the horrible, tragic events of this world will slowly decrease and by making sure that this happens I have challenged myself with Mariah's challenge. I believe Mariah's challenge has been a great opportunity to influence young people, to help them want to live a healthy alcohol-free life. I am proud to say I am eligible for this scholarship; I am proud to say I will be continuing to live a happy, healthy life free of any substance abuse or alcohol.

Mariah's Challenge has not changed my life. That could be the worst possible sentence for me to start out this essay. However, I think my honesty works when I proudly say that I do not do drugs or drink. My parents raised me with the motto, "Do what you please, but you will deal with the consequences of your actions." Though that's a recipe for disaster with most teenagers, knowing that I wasn't going to be bailed out of anything helped me push myself to success. I was lucky that the idea of drugs never appealed to me. I don't understand the point of lighting something on fire to inhale the smoke or drinking something that tastes like it smells: disgusting. The subject was never taboo in my household, thus never igniting a rebellious curiosity, but it certainly wasn't encouraged. I only wish more of Butte's youth were raised this way.

It's truly heartbreaking to watch my classmates enter rehab, even more heartbreaking to watch them refuse the help they need. To Butte, it's a game. Who can come up with the best answer to, "So guess what happened to me last night?" Who's the newest person to get their green card, and what excuse did they use? I've been around drugs, and I've always declined, but my friends have ceased to use them around me. One step at a time, as they say. Maybe I should staple a picture of my face to their forehead to ensure constant sobriety? I know they resist out of respect, but I hope one day that respect will become understanding. There's a whole world out there. Why limit yourself to a bottle?

The Challenge didn't change my choices, it strengthened them. It's the first step to a cleaner future for Butte, and it has inspired me knowing there are more people striving to make a difference.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Sometimes it is okay to be a follower. Several years ago I decided to follow my brother's example and accept Mariah's Challenge. I was in junior high when I first noticed his commitment to the Challenge. I respect and admire my brother because he stayed focused on his schoolwork and soccer. Recently, I saw his pain as he talked about visiting a former soccer teammate who survived, but with devastating brain trauma, a drinking and driving accident.

So I will follow his example. Mariah's Challenge has helped me to believe that to achieve my greatest potential I must remain strong in my conviction to avoid drinking and any other momentary decision that could compromise my future. Because of this decision, my college and career plans are clear and focused. They are not fogged by a confused or altered mental state.

This decision has not come easy. The peer pressure to drink and smoke in high school is very strong and hard to avoid. I may have missed out on some fun times. I may have let some friendships slip away. But in the end, I have a strong and healthy mind and body. I have a bright future. I have self-confidence and self-respect.

Sometimes teammates, classmates, or random people you don't even know, notice the actions and decisions you make. I like to believe that I have set a positive example for others to follow, like the one my brother set for me. Mariah's Challenge has allowed me to be the best that I can be. It has allowed me to achieve my greatest potential.

How Mariachi's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariachi's Challenge has changed my life by helping me not drink before I'm twenty-one. It also helped me to realize when I'm old enough to drink I must drink responsibly. Also, when I'm with my friends to not let them drink and drive.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

I was with Mariah McCarthy the night that she was killed by a drunk driver. I hadn't seen Mariah in a very long time and we were very good friends when we were younger at daycare. I accepted Mariah's Challenge when I was 14 years old and I have never broken that promise. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life immensely. It has showed me who I could be and who I want to be, and I want to be a good role model for the adolescence of Butte. I took this challenge because it is something that I truly believed in. I do not believe there is any reason that kids should be drinking at all while under the age of 21. And under no circumstances drink and drive. This challenge has made me realize what a difference I can make in not only Butte, but in America. I tend to keep my promises. I will not drink until I am of age simply because it is the right thing to do. That whole experience made me realize how fortunate I am and that I can make a difference. I accept Mariah's Challenge and I promise to you, and to myself I am completely capable of keeping this promise.

My parents have said that the entire underage drinking climate of Butte has changed due to Mariah's Challenge. It truly is protecting the community's most valuable asset—its youth.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life Essay

The terrible shock of Mariah's death was felt by everyone in my family. We drove by the scene and couldn't believe it happened.

I've taken the Mariah's Challenge. I won't drink as an underage minor. I won't drink and drive. I won't ride with another person who has been drinking. I won't abuse illegal drugs. Drinking and driving is wrong and my parents have taught me this for years. My parents do not drink and we don't have alcohol in our home.

Butte has been known as a party town for over 100 years – hard working, hard playing, and hard drinking. My mom was told that before she came to school at Montana Tech and her family tried to discourage her from going to college in Butte because of this attitude. Partying and underage drinking have been accepted for years in Butte.

Mariah's Challenge is beginning to change that attitude. It's easier to say no to a beer or to hang out at a fire. It's easier to say no to going to a party where alcohol may be served. Even the swim team has a non-alcohol policy that includes not attending any activity where alcohol may be served and you could get kicked off the team if pictures of you drinking were posted on Facebook. I was unable to attend a bridal shower for my hairdresser this spring because it was held at a local hotel and champagne might be served.

I am a member of the youth group at the Assembly of God Church. This church connection also makes it easy to say no to drinking and drugs.

Taking the Mariah's Challenge has been a positive influence in my life. I will continue to work to promote these positive changes as a result of Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge affected me indirectly, but it taught me at a young age that the consequences of my actions affect not only me but everyone around me, whether I know them or not.

When Mariah's tragedy happened I was thirteen years old, a time when kids start experimenting with various substances trying to be grown up and have fun. Going to Central, however, you never really did the "bad things" that we heard the kids in public schools were doing. When Leo McCarthy and Mariah's friends, some of which went to central themselves, came to talk to us about what had happened, it really struck a chord in me. I never, in my fishbowl point of view, had thought that this could happen in my town and to someone so close to my age. It made me realize that even the smallest decisions I make on a daily basis can have huge consequences and could alter someone else's life irrevocably. This knowledge was especially important when I went onto high school, at Butte High, where peer-pressure to be "cool" and have friends weighs on your head like a cinderblock. Mariah's Challenge taught me that you don't need to party or to have friends who party to be cool and that realization gave me such a strong sense of who I am and what I believed in, and this allowed me the freedom to pursue various extra-curricular activities. It's a sad situation to have happened, however, my inner-core values are stronger than they would have been otherwise. With this inner-strength, I am confident about going to college where I'll be faced with the same peer-pressures, if not

more. I thank the Mariah's Challenge organization because they gave me strength to move off of the traditional Butte High School path and hopefully leave a brighter path for future students to follow. I hope I made a difference.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I will never forget that horrible day in October when the news of her tragic death & injury of her friends was spread about our town. It was hard to believe this was happening; I personally knew these girls and their families and when I think about this terrible tragedy, it did not have to happen. Mariah, who was a year ahead of me at Hillcrest and East, always had a smile on her face. She didn’t deserve this and neither did her family. I, along with my family was very saddened by her death and the affects it had and still does on her family, friends, and community. Her passing and the way it happened was senseless and that is why I accepted Mariah’s Challenge. I took the Challenge and stuck with it during the rest of my junior high and high school days. I will admit it is not easy due to so much peer pressure and trying to fit in, but I knew that I didn’t need to fit in that way. I knew I needed to be me. I decided after this happened to Mariah, Kaitlyn, and Valarie, that I would become a member of TASC (Teens Advocating a Safe Community) and hopefully make a difference in my life and the lives of those who chose this path as well. It was also a hope of mine to change the minds of some of those peers that were making the wrong choices and I feel like my proactive approach may have done that. Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life for the better and as I graduate high school I know I have the confidence and knowledge to make the right choices for me and hopefully influence those around me.

Thank you for your consideration,

How Mariah's Challenge has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has influence many of my decisions about drinking simply because it showed me just how precious life can be. It showed me that any innocent person can lose their life because of someone else making the wrong decision at the wrong time. The night that Mariah lost her life I believe influenced not only me, but many more adolescents and adults in our Butte community to make the right decisions about drinking and driving. A life is much too precious to put in danger over one stupid mistake and alcohol really influences your decisions in a bad way. I don't believe that Wayne Peterson had thought through what could have happened the night Mariah lost her life, but had he made the right decision and simply called someone for a ride, I believe Mariah would still be here. The challenge has made me respect and realize the true influence that both alcohol and the wrong decisions can have on yours and others lives. I never personally knew Mariah, but from the sounds of it she was a very warm hearted and overall amazing girl. She never deserved to lose her life based off of someone else's bad decisions, especially when she was completely innocent in the whole thing. Mariah never deserved what had happened that night, and Kaitlyn and Valerie never deserved to endure what they had to either. Alcohol can change someone's life in an instant, and this is how Mariah's Challenge has influenced my decisions and changed my life.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways. To begin with, Mariah's Challenge has made me more aware about the dangers involved with drinking and driving. If an individual makes the irresponsible decision to drive while under the influence, they are not only putting themselves in harm's way but also endangering the lives of others. People need to understand that driving is a privilege, not a right. Sometimes I get so discouraged when I read in the newspaper about a person getting their sixth or seventh DUI and not serving any jail time. Montana has to adopt stricter DUI laws and larger fines. It is only a matter of time before that individual hurts themselves, others, or both. Also, I believe that underage drinking is a major problem in Butte. Due to the lack of adolescent activities such as arcades, dollar theater, underage dance clubs, etc., teenagers resort to drinking as an outlet to have fun. I think that Mariah's Challenge has not only affected my life in a positive manner, but has also affected the lives of other teenagers. Sometimes when I am tempted or peer-pressured to drink, I think about Mariah and her father's determination for this tragedy not to happen to any other child and his/her family. My mother has always told my friends and I, if we ever find ourselves in a situation where we have been drinking, to please not drive and she will come pick us up no matter what time. She only wants us to get home safe, and not to hurt anyone else.

Furthermore, I plan on attending Montana Tech next fall majoring in nursing. Ever since I was a little girl, I have always dreamt of becoming a nurse so I can have the opportunity to help and support people during their worse times. I want to make a difference in someone's life, and make a positive contribution to my community. My goal when I become a nurse is to bring hope and comfort to my patients, along with a smile.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by making me realize how one choice can change your life. I have chosen to take Mariah's Challenge because in the years since this tragedy happened, I haven't been able to shake the feeling of sadness that I feel every time I see Mariah's picture or listen to her father speak. Because one person chose to drink and then get behind the wheel, a person is gone and a family and community have suffered. So the question for me is, "Do I really want to take that chance?" Is it really that important to me to go out with my friends and drink and maybe drive or get in the car with someone that has been drinking? The answer has always been "no" for me. I don't want to take that chance because the risks are just too great. I have had many experiences in my high school years. I have not missed out on anything because I took Mariah's Challenge. I have played sports. I have gone to dances. I have done activities with my friends. I have made the right choice. Sometimes, one choice can change your life.

Mariah's Challenge
Board of Directors
PO Box 2123
Butte, MT 59701

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Through Mariah's Challenge, I have seen many students meet and come up short to the expectations set forth by the Mariah's Challenge Board of Directors. However, the ones that, not only meet the bottom-line requirements, but do much more are really the ones who are spectacular people. These people are most likely going to engage in more beneficial activities. Such actions include advocating for others, not just themselves, to restrain from alcohol and drugs or bad grades, or something as unnoticeable as refusing to be around their peers who engage in those very activities. These students very rarely get rewarded for abstaining from this negative conduct. Such people are the ones who deserve to be reminded that they are, in fact, doing something special, something out of the ordinary. The scholarship offered through your organization, Mariah's Challenge, is that 'something special.' Mariah's Challenge encourages teens to, not only accept a simple challenge, but to embrace a lifestyle that is not clouded by alcohol or drugs. So that a simple teen can "do the right thing," and finally get rewarded for it. And they shall be rewarded for no other reason than they deserve it.

My whole life, I was willing to restrain from this conduct because I wanted to prove to no one other than myself, that I am one to not follow the crowd. Without Mariah's Challenge, I would still uphold the principles of your organization because they are important to me. But with it, it becomes an opportunity to remind me why these values are important. And for that reason, my life has been changed because these kids, and myself, that deserve something special, but finally receive it.

How Mariah's Challenge had Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in the fact that I need to be more aware of the people on the roads; especially at night because people do not necessarily always put on their lights. Mariah's Challenge has not only changed my life, but it has changed this town's life as a whole. The people used to say "yes drinking and driving is bad but you never get caught," then they just brush it off like no big deal. Now they notice that yes it is a big deal, and we need to something about it. Because of this accident, during my lifetime, I will never drink and drive, even though I knew of the danger and what it could cause. The accident, I think, put it into retrospect of how much turmoil it could cause to a lot of people. I, myself think that I have a much better perspective on what drinking and driving can really cause. That is why my life is going to be drug and alcohol free.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways. Starting out with the obvious, I do not drink and drive. But I did not drink before that accident, and I will not drink for the rest of my life. Drinking and drugs are not a thing that I associate myself with. I do not have the need to fill my system with things that do not belong there.

Mariah's Challenge is a great motivator and I think a lot more people need to get involved with it. Too many people are dying or getting in big accidents from being involved with drugs and alcohol. I think that it has changed my life, or impacted my life, by letting me know that there are more people like me, and more people are taking an effort to change their lives to live drug and alcohol free.

There are many things that we can do to challenge ourselves and our friends and families. We can take the chance and ask them to put down the bottle or put away the drugs for one day and see if they could do it. We can impact other people's lives by making a change in our own.

I think the Butte community as a whole had been impacted by Mariah's Challenge just because more people are taking into consideration the well-being of others and not just themselves.

The main impact on my life that Mariah's Challenge has put on it is to always be away of your surroundings and what other people are doing around you. Just because you are aware of them doesn't mean they are aware of you.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My name is _____ and I have accepted Mariah's Challenge.

Mariah McCarthy was only one year older than me when her accident occurred. At that time, I was a seventh grader. I was very upset when I learned what happened and was very angry with the person who was driving the vehicle. The incident not only affected me, but impacted the entire city of Butte and State of Montana.

Mariah was a great person and a great role model. We attended the same school and I truly enjoyed visiting with her at school and during outside activities. Through my actions, I have tried to be a good role model within our community, for my peers and for younger kids. I did not use illegal substances prior to the accident. The accident and everything that followed reinforced my choice to remain chemical free until the appropriate age, even in light of the peer pressure I have received at times. Taking a vow not to drink or use illegal drugs and to make the right choices has been an easy task for me in order to do the right thing and to honor Mariah's memory.

I feel very proud to have accepted Mariah's Challenge, to honor Mariah and to remain chemical free.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life by showing me how strong a community can be. Since Mariah’s Challenge was started in 2008, the amount of teenage drinking has significantly gone down. As a high school senior, I’m sure I see and hear of far less of my peers’ drinking than four or five years ago. Butte has been a drinking-oriented community since the days of the miners. Before Mariah’s Challenge, Butte was headed toward out-of-control drinking. It’s sad that this community had to wait for the death of a child from drunk driving to change its ways, but since that happened, I see change coming. I see a community coming together to make a better future for its youth. This community is pushing for stronger youth, a youth that is better than drinking and driving. I see a community that is pushing against underage drinking in general. The prevention tactics are stronger than ever and I believe these tactics will help to change the ways of Butte’s youth. Butte’s youth is stronger than drinking and stronger than making stupid decisions. I’m stronger. I’m Butte Tough. I know how to say “no”. I’m not the only one. I see this community getting stronger by the day as people like my peers and I say no to complying with standards set by this drinking-oriented community. Hopefully this change will catch fire and spread all over Butte and all over Montana.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life on how I act around others. I know when to say no. Saying no to alcohol and drugs makes me feel good about myself. As teenagers we can have fun without that by doing fun things with friends such as going bowling or going to a movie. When people think they are much better than others just because they go out and party all the time. They don’t think about what they are doing and what could happen to them. When I see all these students in the newspaper because of a MIP it makes me think, why are people doing this to their lives. It doesn’t make them any cooler. I did TIP my eighth grade year and enjoyed being part of it. I also knew Mariah and knowing that this happened to her means it can happen to anyone. Now that I am a senior I realize that no matter how many of my peers are partying every weekend. That doesn’t make who I am. I always say no because I know what will happen. My parents have helped me with good decision makings. My mother has told me stories of people she knew that got hit by a drunk driver in car accidents and what it did to the families. It is the hardest to overcome and by that one time of doing something stupid it could cause you to lose your life or someone else’s. That is something no one should ever have to face if we just make the right choices and teenagers and adults. I love art, it is my passion. I want to go onto college to continue my education in art education. I want to continue making the right choices so that I can further my education into getting my career started. I want to continue being a good role model for others and look up to others that are good role models for me.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

After Mariah’s Challenge, my view on alcohol consumption changed completely. I believe drinking is pointless. Drinking really gets you no where in life. Alcohol makes a person immature while drinking. Not remembering what you are doing while drinking alcohol really isn’t cool.

When my fellow classmates talk about how they drink and party over the weekends it makes them sound ridiculous to me. I wish I could just try to remind them of the night of October 28, 2007. Unfortunately, they don’t listen and don’t care. It makes me sad when my friends and family go out and drink.

My Grandma and Grandpa are so stressed out because of drinking and driving abuse. My Uncle has gotten numerous DUI’s in his lifetime. He is in jail right now and is in huge trouble because of this problem. It is very depressing; once people have a drinking problem they very rarely quit.

I have even lost one of my close cousins because of drinking and driving. To top it off, this happened just a few days before my birthday a few years ago. This all happened because he chose to drink and drive, and obviously it was a bad choice. He got rushed to the hospital around 2 am and his father, my Uncle Jack, was working graveyard at the hospital at this time, and did not even recognize his own son because of his injuries.

Mariah’s Challenge is an excellent program and I really wish that it would influence everyone in the world to stop drinking and driving. However, we all know this won’t happen. Mariah’s Challenge has affected my life dramatically and it makes me crazy when people drink and drive. I will do anything to enforce this program.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge changed the entire dynamic of Butte. But as a teenage girl, Mariah's Challenge had an even greater effect on my life. Mariah's Challenge has shown me the importance of being responsible for my actions. This challenge is something that the entire community can believe in.

When you're in high school, one does not think of the consequences of your actions. One thinks that its only high school and nothing really important can come of it. Teenagers often have the mentality that they can do what they want, when they want. As teenagers, we are impulsive, which often leads us to trouble.

Mariah's Challenge taught me that I really am in charge of my life. My actions, and the consequences that follow, really do matter. When I was younger I thought that when I am an adult is going to be the only time that matters. When I am an adult I need to be responsible. When I am an adult I will always make the right decision. Mariah's Challenge has shown me that I can do all that now, without waiting to become an "adult." I can make a difference in my life right now.

Taking Mariah's Challenge put me in charge on my own life. By taking this challenge, I made an active decision in the way I want to live my life. That kind of decision is a powerful statement. Most teenagers do not realize that they can make such a decision at such a young age. Taking our lives into our own hands ensures that we live a life we can all be proud of.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

I have always striven to be one of those stereotypic "good kids." I don't take drugs, I don't drink alcohol, and have never been a part of the "party scene". As a sophomore at Butte High School, the tragic accident which claimed Mariah McCarthy's life challenged me to do more.

The following month, I resolved to help change my community rather than sitting on the sidelines. I joined the teen-based coalition, T.A.S.C. (Teens Advocating a Safe Community) and proved to myself just what an impact my volunteerism could have on my hometown.

Today I am the Vice President of T.A.S.C., which continues to spread the message of Mariah's Challenge. We encourage teenagers to make positive choices and help families spend time together. The largest focus of T.A.S.C. is curbing substance abuse among our peers through several safe teen alternative parties on St. Patrick's Day, Evel Knievel Days, and Halloween when levels of alcohol consumption escalate. It is our way of proving to teens in our community that you don't need to drink or do drugs to have fun. T.A.S.C. helps plan and execute the annual middle school lock-in, known as Teens in Partnership (T.I.P.). Last year T.I.P. launched a similar program dubbed Project Working on Our Futures (WOOF) for sixth graders. Both seminars focus on helping youth transition from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school by addressing a plethora of concerns from relationships to alcohol and peer pressure. If it had not been for Mariah's Challenge, I may never have taken the initiative to be part of the change I wanted to see in Butte. I am proud to have taken Mariah's Challenge and will continue to encourage my peers to continue making positive choices.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

As a freshman and sophomore in high school, the pressure to drink was relatively unapparent. However as my high school career progressed, my choice to be alcohol free began to be questioned by my peers. Today, I’ve stayed dedicated to my decision to join Mariah’s Challenge while also encouraging others to do the same.

As I make my way to college in at The University of Montana, I’ll take Mariah’s Challenge with me. The challenge has persuaded me to stay focused in school and to stay away from the infamous alcohol scene of Butte. While hearing stories of mishaps because of alcohol and watching classmates barely slip pass classes, I always had Mariah’s Challenge in the back of my mind, reminding me to stay away from alcohol and the consequences that come with it.

After accepting Mariah’s Challenge, I realized how my choices affect others around me. While a hundred Irish Dancers watch my every move, it is my responsibility to give them the opportunity to follow a positive role model. Because I am in a position to influence part of Butte’s youth, I must be dependable. Setting them astray due to a thoughtless mistake on a Friday night is not an option, and Mariah’s Challenge has helped me set an example I am proud to encourage the dancers follow.

I’m pleased to say I have never taken part in underage drinking. I’ve never felt the need to drink to fit in. I’m comfortable in my own skin, and although they may not be as comfortable with themselves yet, I’m happy to convey there is a new group of dancers ready to take Mariah’s Challenge.

Mariah's Challenge has made a huge impact on my life. Although I didn't know Mariah I have always believed in what Mariah's Challenge stands for.

Since I can remember I've never liked alcohol, and when I was in elementary school in Great Falls we had the D.A.R.E program which helped me with my beliefs. Also my parents' not drinking has had a great influence in my life.

A few years ago, probably ten or so, my parents had a friend over that they met when they lived in England. He brought a case of beer over and left it in our fridge. The next day my mom asked me to throw it away so I got a paper towel, wrapped it around the bottle and threw it away. Maybe that's a little extreme but I was young and didn't like alcohol then, and still don't to this day.

In the fourth grade I lived in Great Falls and we had the D.A.R.E program, which stands for drug abuse resistance education. In this program we had a police officer come in once a week and talk to us about drugs and alcohol and what it can do to you. Being a police officer they see a lot of situations where drugs and alcohol can cause people to bad things and they would talk to us and share what they know and have experienced with us. It was a great program and I learned so much from that experience and it has helped make me the person I am today and made me believe the way I do about alcohol and drug use.

My parents are a big reason I think the way I do. They don't drink and I've only seen my dad take a few sips of a beer but that doesn't happen much and I can only remember two times where it has. I have never ever seen my mother drink. When I was growing up I never remember my parents telling me drinking is bad or that I shouldn't do it, but the fact that they never did made me not interested in it. My parents taught me that I can have just as much fun sober as I can if I were drunk. They taught me this without even knowing it and by just being there for me. Plus when you're sober you can remember the fun you've had unlike when you're drunk.

I think Mariah's Challenge is a great idea but I wish more kids would follow it. I accept Mariah's Challenge; I always have and always will!

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Over my four years of high school I have experienced many life changing events. The one that held the most impact though was when my fellow classmate was ran down on the road by a drunk driver. I knew like all other teens in Butte that drinking is almost a part of our culture. I always knew drinking and driving was wrong but this is the time it really hit home. I had known Mariah when we were younger and loosing someone I personally knew and who was my age was a shock.

I pledged to Mariah’s challenge as soon as I could and have refrained from drinking all through high school. I even lost two of my close friends because I could no longer handle their constantly wanting to go drinking and me not wanting to be a part of that. The part that pushed me over the edge was when I found out my friend had drove drunk once and since that time I have not spoken to either of them and have since found new more responsible friends.

I made a promise to Mariah’s Challenge, my parents, and most importantly me that I would be a responsible high school student and would refrain from the use of drugs and alcohol. I am very proud to say that I have been able to keep that promise even though the pressures to drink in high school are still unimaginably high. I want to change the lifestyle of the people in this town and I hope that my class takes this more seriously than the others since Mariah was our classmate and I still wish that she was here to enjoy graduating with the rest of us.

Shock and devastation covered my face; my whole body went numb, and my heart shattered into a hundred pieces when I heard the horrifying news that Mariah McCarthy had lost her life because of a drunk driver. The driver said he didn't mean to do it, but that didn't change the fact that a precious friend had been lost - a best friend whom I had known since fourth grade.

As a result of this demoralizing loss, deciding to take Mariah's Challenge has become a tribute to our friendship. Taking the challenge has changed my life in so many ways, but two of them are more important than the others. Mariah's Challenge has changed my attitude about drinking and about the people who drink.

Before Mariah's accident happened drinking had never really bothered me, but then again I was only 14 so I didn't know much on drinking. Since the accident drinking has bothered me quite a lot, because I lost a friend to a drunk driver and I don't need to lose another. Drinking is a disgusting and horrible habit. Alcohol changes people by causing a change to their normal personalities making them become aggressive or loopy. At least that is what happens to my parents when they are drunk.

My attitude towards people who drink has changed dramatically. Before Mariah's death I never really paid attention to my mom's drinking. Now I realize that drinking is all my mom ever does. My mom is a mean and aggressive drunk, and all she ever does when she is drunk is yell at me and tell me that I am a horrible daughter. I am in the National Honor Society at Butte High School and there is a ceremony that takes place to present awards to the honor students. My mom came to the ceremony drunk. I really didn't need that from her when I was already stressed enough. She humiliated me.

After Mariah's accident most of her friends from high school still drink to this day. In school people complain that they received MIPs over the previous weekend. They are extremely upset that they have to do community service. I don't feel sorry for the people who received MIPs because they deserved them.

Mariah's Challenge changed my life, making me realize that drinking alcohol is a huge part of American society. Mariah's Challenge has changed my attitude towards the people who drink. I accept Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Mariah McCarthy was a classmate of mine. I was not exactly a friend of Mariah but I was still saddened to hear of her tragic passing. But, something incredible was born of this tragedy. When I heard the challenge and the influence it had on the community, I took the challenge myself. I am against all drugs and alcohol in minors. People should not have access to such things if they are not responsible. Mariah's Challenge helped me stay on the right path. It definitely played a big roll in helping me resist peer pressure and situations involving drugs and alcohol. I believe that Mariah's Challenge will help a lot of adults and teenagers resist dangerous situations. I am a strong supporter of Mariah's Challenge and hope that the challenge will become a national movement. I have encouraged others my age to steer clear of drugs and alcohol because they can lead to dangerous situations. I also encourage adults not to drink and drive, or drink dangerously. I hope to influence younger people to follow in my footsteps to avoid situations involving drugs and alcohol. I hope that the applications for your scholarships this year are from true people who took the Challenge and not from deceitful people trying to get a free ride. Only people who truly believe in the power of the challenge should get this scholarship. Thank you for your time and consideration.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The inspiring story of Mariah McCarthy has opened my eyes to the realistic consequences that occur when one drinks and drives. Drinking, partying, and doing the "High School" thing has never appealed to me. My relationship with God and my involvement in Martial Arts has helped me develop a firm foundation of common sense and understanding to not drink. God is my everything, without him I wouldn't be the person I am today. The 15 years of Martial Arts training I have received from George Orcutt has been a true blessing. The discipline and life skills I have received has helped me to learn how to live my life as an example.

God has sheltered me from alcohol and kept me on a path of wisdom and righteousness which is identical to the goals of Mariah's Challenge. When I was very young I made the decision to seriously follow Jesus for a lifetime. The peace and love he fills me with is well-worth the serious dedication required to follow him. God has helped me make it my mission to live as an example to others around me. Drinking and partying is definitely not a part of that equation.

One area in my life God has used is Martial Arts. Class started at the age of three. Since then I have become an instructor at Self Defense USA. The main focus is to lift up confident leaders, all of this has taught me the morals and lessons necessary in living my life as an inspiration, just like Mariah's Challenge.

In closing, Mariah's Challenge is an inspiration to me to continue on the path I'm on. My relationship with God and my Martial Arts background share the same great values associated in this one of a kind Challenge.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship Committee
P.O. Box 66
Butte, MT 59703

Dear Scholarship Committee,

I have been around Mariah's Challenge for most of my life and for my entire High School career. I was thirteen when Mariah's Challenge had first begun and it has been everywhere I turn since. Mariah's Challenge has influenced me to think more deeply about decisions that I make, even if they don't have anything to do with drinking or drinking and driving. I have been in scenarios where I have been offered alcohol or been around people where alcohol has been involved and I have always made the wise decision to either leave or just not drink. I am always the one that makes sure that everyone is taken care of and that nothing bad will happen. Without Mariah's Challenge kids my age would not be aware of the dangers of drinking and driving and just drinking in general. What Mariah's Challenge has done is save lives and makes Butte a better place in the eyes of our citizens and of people's eyes from out of town. We no longer can be perceived as a state that is all about drinking, Butte now can be known as a state that cares about its children and its people. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge I now feel safer walking and driving around Butte. Mariah's Challenge has changed lives and saved future lives. Thank you for everything.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Teenagers today are extremely short-sighted. They constantly “live in the moment” or “live in the fast lane”. While this outlook on life isn’t necessarily wrong, living life to the fullest in today’s society means partying-and lots of it. This is especially true in Butte Montana where drinking is quite literally a part of our heritage. Underage drinking, while detrimental to a teenager’s future, was not identified as a problem until Mariah’s Challenge spotlighted the dangers of both teen drinking and driving while under the influence. Now Mariah’s Challenge provides incentive for the teens of Butte to abstain from underage drinking and providing them with a support network for the struggle that they will face. However, Mariah’s Challenge also served me in that it taught me about the finality and consequences of our actions.

Teenagers often think they are invincible. This mindset proves to be the catalyst for idiotic courses of action throughout the teen years. Although this has proven itself to be the norm, the tragic events surrounding the foundation of Mariah’s Challenge have shown me that we are highly susceptible to both the finality and consequences of our actions. A teenager who goes out to drink one night may very well get an MIP. They have just sacrificed their reputation and a portion of their future for a drink. When a teenager decides to drive home after the consumption of alcohol, they may very well get a DUI, hurt themselves or hurt someone else. Our actions as teenagers carry lasting consequences and drastically effect the way we are viewed by our elders and our peers. Because of Mariah’s Challenge, I have decided to abstain from any form of illegal substance use, be it drugs or alcohol. My future is too bright to snuff out with poor decision making.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life

My first exposure to Mariah’s Challenge occurred in junior high after the tragedy that took Mariah’s life. My dad explained to me how making a single bad decision can impact the lives of many people. It really made me think about my future. I have since challenged myself to set a pattern of making the right decisions and have goals not only for myself but my peers as well. The work of Mariah’s Challenge has provided a positive direction regarding drinking and driving and convincing people of all ages it should not be tolerated.

After nearly four years of high school, I am amazed at the number of young people who have taken this challenge and are a voice for others. Mariah’s Challenge continues to grow in strength and has become a visible educational tool used to change the mentality and culture of people in the state of Montana. It has not been an easy task, but the fortitude of its founders is unmatched. This grass roots effort has expanded and the support provided by all entities is amazing.

The impact of Mariah’s Challenge can be felt with people of all generations. The culture of drinking and driving can no longer be accepted. I am proud of the great efforts made by Mariah’s Challenge and the community of Butte in being the leaders for change. Mariah’s Challenge continues to provide young people not only educational material regarding right decisions, but true values that can be used for a lifetime. I am proud to have taken the Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Growing up in a community that is as tight-knit as Butte is, when a tragedy strikes everyone is affected. When Mariah was killed, I was an eighth grader and didn't really understand what had happened, but I had seen the damage that it had caused to the community. My neighbor was in the ninth grade with Mariah and was crushed by what happened. She was good friends with Mariah and I saw how devastated she was. She told me everything that had gone on and helped me understand. I vowed after that day not to cause the same type of pain to someone else like what had happened to her and the rest of the community. From that point on, I did not want to drink and have yet to this day had any alcohol. This is a very rare thing for a high school student to say. Now that I am a senior I have seen enough drinking during my high school years to see the problems that it causes. I am glad that Mariah's Challenge has forced some students to take a look at what drinking can do to a community. Mariah will always be in our hearts and hopefully Mariah's Challenge will change many more lives than just mine in its lifetime.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The amount of drinking and driving that happens across the United States and even Montana is catastrophic. Too many people do not realize the consequences of their actions. That is why when Mariah's Challenge first came out in the Butte community it sincerely made me observe my own actions. The Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by making Butte a safer place to live by addressing the amount of drunk driving that happens. Especially as a teen, there are challenges of peer pressure to go party and get drunk which many kids find hard to resist. Mariah's Challenge has acted as a stepping stone for many of my peers to make right decisions. It has challenged me to never make the decision of drinking under age and especially not to get behind the wheel of a vehicle while intoxicated. I have seen the impact that Mariah's Challenge has made in my school because many teens have begun to understand how alcohol can affect the body. Now, they are educated about the decisions they are making and will be more likely to make the right one. In so many ways the dynamics of Butte have changed because of Mariah's Challenge and it has played a huge part in my life by keeping my community safer and helping me understand more and more the devastating consequences of drunk driving.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Drunk driving has claimed so many lives. I find it odd that something so preventable occurs all the time and reaps such catastrophe and loss. Mariah's Challenge is a program that encourages citizens to be responsible for their lives and the lives of others, by discouraging drunk driving.

Mariah's Challenge was created after the death of Mariah McCarthy and the injuries sustained by her two friends, Valarie Kilmer and Kaitlyn Okrusch. While I never knew Mariah, I have known Valarie for approximately ten years. The havoc wreaked by Mariah's death has extended to me because of my friendship with Valarie. It was difficult for me, as Valarie's friend, to know that she was experiencing such pain and hardship through the death of Mariah.

Not only was my friend Valarie injured by a drunk driver and her friend killed, but drunk driving has affected me in a more personal way. I never met my grandmother, because when my father was sixteen, my grandmother was killed by a drunk driver three days before Christmas. It is an odd concept to grasp, that I have never met my own grandmother because of one person's choice to drink and drive.

I have felt the reverberations of drunk driving, but consider how many more stories there are, of pain and disaster caused by intoxicated drivers. Entire towns are affected by drunk drivers, as the case has been with Mariah McCarthy. While I had never met Mariah, she was one year older than I, and the truth of her death struck me personally.

Mariah's Challenge was born out of the McCarthy family's tragedy and loss. It is a regretful way for a beneficial program to be born, but it has encouraged an awareness for drunk driving, and actively worked toward cutting down on the number of drunk drivers.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

To start with, I would like to state that when I was seven years old I had been diagnosed with brain cancers, which called for immediate surgery. For the next two and a half months I went through several radiation and chemotherapy treatments that ended up heightening the sensitivity of my sense of smell. Being in the one of the coffee meccas of the world, Seattle Washington, I soon discovered that due to my heightened sensitivity I could hardly tolerate the smell of coffee, not to mention that I could not go near any person who was smoking or drinking without gagging as soon as the scent hit my nose. As the years past by my tolerance for coffee has improved yet cigarette smoke and alcohol are another story. As to the tragedy of Mariah McCarthy, I cannot describe how sad I felt knowing that the addictive poison of alcohol has claimed another life. This is why I joined Mariah's challenge during the eighth grade, to band together with my fellow students to help end the danger of alcohol, and its ability to destroy the mind. Like many of my friends, I find the true problem is how to persuade kids, teenagers, and adults that alcohol and drugs are not the only way to have fun in life. Our problem now is the party atmosphere in collage life, I know myself that my feelings towards alcohol and any other drug will hold firm.

"How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life"

I remember it just as if it happened yesterday! October 28, 2007, I was in the eighth grade at the time. I remember hearing the name and thinking to myself I know those girls. I knew who Mariah was because I played traveling volleyball in the same club as her. She was an amazing girl, and definitely shouldn't have her life taken by someone who made the irresponsible choices.

I remember accepting Mariah's challenge as soon as it came out. I strongly disagree with drinking first off, but I really discourage driving under the influence! In fact, I will always be willing to give anyone a ride no matter what time of the night it is if they are drinking. They can not only kill themselves, but they can kill an innocent person such as Mariah. This was a sad time for Butte. We lost an amazing girl that would light up the room if she was in it. I remember watching all of the news, the basketball half times, buying all of the t-shirts to be a Mariah's Messenger, buying the bracelets, everything I remember it all. It was such a tragedy to Butte that I especially remember the date it happened, and every October 28th I wore a Mariah's Messenger shirt in remembrance of her.

Mariah's Challenge is such a wonderful thing that you guys have created for this community. I want to thank you so much for everything you have done over the years! You guys opened your heart to let the community of Butte help you with the loss of/injuries of your daughters. You not only did that, but you have created wonderful goals that kids set for themselves by accepting Mariah's Challenge. I proudly accept Mariah's Challenge!!!



How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When I was an incoming freshman to Butte High, I did not have many friends. I learned that going to a new school, especially the transfer from junior high to high school, was extremely difficult. I was stressed, and I pushed away many who tried to help me. I even considered turning to drugs and alcohol. I knew people who drank, partied, and did drugs, seemingly without any repercussions. Then I learned of Mariah's Challenge.

After hearing about Mariah's Challenge, I knew I could never and would never do drugs or drink underage or while driving. I realized that underage drinking and driving while under the influence of alcohol *did* have consequences. Extreme consequences. Internally, I vowed to accept the Challenge. Instead of turning to drugs and alcohol, I became involved in extracurricular activities and volunteering. Mariah's Challenge prevented me from going to a dark place that is hard to come back from.

I no longer allowed myself to be surrounded by people who drank while underage or who used drugs. Instead of avoiding the problem and pretending I did not hear when others discussed their "wild parties" in class, I told them of Mariah's Challenge and the devastating events that can occur in such situations. Because of Mariah's Challenge, I have not touched alcohol or any illegal drugs at all. Mariah's Challenge changed me from a teenager tolerant of drug and alcohol abuse into a productive young adult trying to better my community. If it were not for Mariah's Challenge, it is likely that I would not be graduating this May nor attending college this fall. Mariah's Challenge helped me to realize that drug and alcohol abuse are not acceptable, and truly helped me become a better person.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My name is Brock Bond and I have accepted Mariah's Challenge.

Mariah McCarthy was only one year older than me when her accident occurred. At that time, I was a seventh grader. I was very upset when I learned what happened and was very angry with the person who was driving the vehicle. The incident not only affected me, but impacted the entire city of Butte and State of Montana.

Mariah was a great person and a great role model. We attended the same school and I truly enjoyed visiting with her at school and during outside activities. Through my actions, I have tried to be a good role model within our community, for my peers and for younger kids. I did not use illegal substances prior to the accident. The accident and everything that followed reinforced my choice to remain chemical free until the appropriate age, even in light of the peer pressure I have received at times. Taking a vow not to drink or use illegal drugs and to make the right choices has been an easy task for me in order to do the right thing and to honor Mariah's memory.

I feel very proud to have accepted Mariah's Challenge, to honor Mariah and to remain chemical free.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Butte, Montana has been my home all of my life. Butte is not only a hometown, a spot on a map with a post office, but it is a community. This place has always kept the values of community close to the heart, embracing the rich history with a sense of culture and pride; however, Butte has also had its pitfalls as underage drinking and alcohol related deaths have claimed so many young lives. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge, Butte has become a better place. The challenge, taken by so many teens-myself included, represents a community of Montanan's moving toward a common goal, to eliminate underage drinking and protect the children of this city. Mariah's Challenge has made me into a more dedicated and loyal friend to others in the face of peer pressure. It has given me the strength to stand against underage drinking and the temptations of drug use. For the past 4 years, I have participated in Teens In Partnership, a teen lock-in where I had the privilege to hear Leo McCarthy speak. His inspirational story is not one of grief and defeat, but one of hope and promise. Mariah's Challenge has allowed Leo's story to be heard all across the world, giving kids of all ages the strength to say "no". The support that Mariah's Challenge has given to me has allowed me to abstain from the use of alcohol and drugs for all of my life, embracing what is truly important in this world. Without Mariah's Challenge, many of the others who have done the same might not have been able to do so, but with this amazing program, Butte has found its saving grace, leading the fight against underage drinking around the world.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I remember the accident in which Mariah lost her life and the horrible effect it had on Butte, Montana. No one believes that something tragic will ever happen in a small town, but it did. The response was amazing and has truly changed the outlook on drinking and has stressed the seriousness of drinking and driving. I remember going online and taking Mariah's Challenge. In seventh grade, I promised I would not drink underage and once twenty-one, I would never drink and drive. This is a serious promise, and at twelve years old I would not have understood its meaning if not for everything that Mariah's Challenge has done. Thanks to this wonderful organization, I did, and I still know how incredibly important it is. I have never had the desire to drink, but if that were to ever be pressured upon me, I know I would refuse. One of the reasons is Mariah's Challenge. I know my choices now will affect the rest of my life and I don't want to sacrifice my future because I made a few stupid choices. As an athlete, I don't want to hurt my chances of improving my swim times, just for a night out partying. I also would never want an MIP on my record. More importantly, I would never want to sacrifice anyone else's future, because drinking and driving simply isn't worth that. I made a promise to myself and others, and I want to keep that promise because what happened to Mariah isn't fair, and I never want to be the cause of someone's death. That accident really put into perspective how real the harms of alcohol are; and how drinking irresponsibly affects not only the drinker, but everyone around them. I live near the site of the accident and drive by it on a regular basis. It serves as a reminder of the severe consequences of drinking and driving. Mariah's Challenge has raised my own awareness, and by keeping my promise, I feel like I can help the organization make the world a better place. By showing people the direct consequences that poor decisions can lead to, Mariah's Challenge has definitely discouraged many teenagers from drinking, and has had a large impact on my decision to refrain from drinking.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah was special to me; we grew up together at our day care. She, along with her sister Jenna, were some of my first friends. We went to day care for a few years before we started elementary school. I specifically remember Mariah persuading me to go to Hillcrest elementary school, she said, “The school is so huge, and the kids are so nice!” I trusted Mariah and Jenna, and did not want to leave my two best friends. So with some pretty easy convincing, I decided to attend Hillcrest. Thanks to Mariah and Jenna, I was able to meet some great friends and create unforgettable memories at Hillcrest. Mariah was a year older than me, so our time together had diminished once we had both gone to school. Never would I forget, though, the memories I shared at the day care with Mariah.

Fast-forward seven years. I am now thirteen years old. The morning of October 28, 2007 arrives and my mother solemnly informs me that Mariah had been killed. I later heard about the details of how Mariah was murdered; I was devastated, heart-broke, and confused all within a couple of moments. Immediately, however, I knew that God had taken her to Heaven, her death would be a beacon of light for the awakening of individuals everywhere.

Mariah’s Challenge first impacted the people of Butte, but now the impact can be felt everywhere. People are beginning to wake up and realize the effects of drinking and driving. Mariah’s Challenge has given me the opportunity to partake in the fight against underage drinking. Together, we are working towards a world, especially a culture, which views drinking and driving in a different light. Mariah’s Challenge is changing lives.

How Mariah's Challenge has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge means I do not have to worry about my own classmates saying I am not cool for refusing to drink with them. I do not have to be taunted by kids younger than me for not riding with them in a car while they are drunk. I can point to Mariah's Challenge and say I am taking it for a good cause, to avoid killing an innocent bystander, to avoid being killed, and to avoid prison or life in a wheelchair.

Mariah's Challenge has led me to realize how much of a terrifying effect underage drinking and drunk driving has on a community like Butte, Montana. Students under the age of 21 do not realize how drunk driving can affect them until they lose a loved one to somebody who decided that driving intoxicated was a good idea. Mariah's Challenge informs the young and old citizens of this community what effect drunk driving will have on them before they get into their vehicle after having one too many at the bar, or letting your friend drive off drunk even though you could have driven him home.

Mariah's Challenge keeps people aware of the dangers, and perhaps when they are aware they will act responsibly. They will take the keys away from their friend and not let him drive home so he can hit those teenage kids, so he will not spend his life in prison and forever change the lives of those families.

I do not drink, and never have. I do not let friends drive drunk and never will. I do not drive with anyone that is drunk and I never will. Mariah's Challenge brings home the point of why I must never do such things, or prison, hospital, or the morgue are all that will face me if I do.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Drinking has never been an option for me, not just because it's illegal but because I've seen the terrible things that can come from it. The tragic loss of Mariah in 2007 is one of the most powerful examples of this. Drinking in the Butte community is a very common thing, especially at the high school, but I wish it wasn't. So many kids grow up using alcohol as a way to cope with life when there are so many other healthy ways to deal with things. Although I wasn't very old at the time of the accident I can still see how many changes have been made in response to the Mariah's Challenge. At the TIP lock in my 8th grade year there was a much more serious tone to the way everyone talked about under aged drinking. Instead of treating under aged drinking and driving while under the influence like a joke people actually understood that the decision to do those things affects more than just them. I firmly believe that every person and every decision he/she will make affects the Butte community as a whole. We have seen that here and now. The choice that was made that fateful night was a very bad one and that choice led to many terrible things. But the decision made by Leo McCarthy to take a lead in changing the way people think has made a huge impact in Butte. Because of Mariah's Challenge I have been able to have more support in my decision to not drink and to not drive under the influence.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has greatly changed me and my life. In 2007, I was finally allowed to walk places with my two best friends. We spent a great deal of time walking the three blocks between each other's houses. After Mariah's death my parents cried a great deal and became more over-protective. I was constantly warned that drivers could not be trusted and to be on the alert. I was told repeatedly how valuable a child is and how it would be impossible to find absolution if I were to harm or kill one through the act of drinking and driving. I was told about a drunk driver totaling our truck with the whole family in it when I was two, just missing my pregnant mother. Mariah's death brought home how close I was to being raised by only a father without a sibling.

Looking at Mariah's Challenge now, when so many kids my age are drinking, I realize just what a difference it made. Instead of feeling left out, all I feel is a sense of fear for my classmates. Mariah's Challenge made me realize just how fragile life is. Just because we're young does not mean we are immortal. Just because we may not be driving with someone who is drinking does not mean we are safe. I'm not saying I don't plan on drinking someday. When I'm 21, I'm sure I'll try alcohol. But Mariah, and Mariah's Challenge, will keep me from getting behind the wheel afterwards. I don't want to cause any family the pain that hers went through. I don't want to cause my family pain by getting in a serious wreck while intoxicated. If someday I think I'm safe to drive after a drink or two, I'll think of Mariah.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

I can't say that Mariah's challenge changed anything with my behavior. I always planned to not drink, and this didn't change with Mariah's challenge. Mariah's challenge did do two other things though.

First and foremost Mariah's challenge made the issue of underage drinking real and personal. Instead of this lofty idea that we are told in health class or by our parents, it brought the idea of the harms of drinking home. It was no longer the situation of "yeah I heard of this guy from another guy who heard it from a guy that had a brother who was hurt by drinking." Before the accident with Mariah they still played the sad movies in health class but now it wasn't just a story on a screen, it was that girl who hung out with your sister (the case in my family), the story meant more. Although Mariah's challenge hasn't changed my behavior it has certainly increased my resolve and my conviction against drinking and driving, and underage drinking in general.

The second thing that I feel Mariah's challenge has done for me is to help me realize that there are groups that feel as I do about the idea of drinking. As a high school student there is an incredible peer pressure to drink. Even in the honors' classes that I take this idea is prevalent, with many of the students in those classes drinking regularly. In this environment that our school presents it becomes easy to feel alone. Mariah's challenge however, presents the idea that I am not alone in my beliefs which is very supportive.

The affect of Mariah's challenge on my life has been to support my existing ideals, which has allowed me to resist the pressure to drink in high school more easily.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My name is Mattie Scott, and Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by making me realize what really happens and all the side effects to what drinking can do to you. I go to T.I.P every year and it's a big eye opener. I think that the greatest thing about T.I.P is that you get to talk to people about what you think. There are people that come and show us about what happens when you drink and drive as well. I know that when it comes down to it that I really can find better things to do with my life. I don't need a party or drinking or a lot of friends that are into that to enjoy my nights. I have learned that Mariah's Challenge is for protecting myself as well as other people from getting into harms way. Even though it's not me out drinking and I know one of my friends are I have them call me, because more then likely I'll just be sitting at home waiting to give them a ride so I know that they are home and safe. I've learned by watching people that it is hard to move on from drinking when you start at a young age. They don't realize on what they are doing to everyone around them and to there self. I've lost a family member from drinking and driving and I don't want to go threw that again with either a family member or a friend. That is how I see how Mariah's Challenge has changed my life and what I think about when it comes to that.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Affected My Life

There are too many people who make the wrong choices. They do not think before they take part in their actions. Alcohol can and will get the best of anybody. There is no good in it. Many people, teens especially, do not understand how risky drinking is. They do not think about how drinking and driving can hurt so many people.

Too many people throw away their lives just to have what they call a good time. Whether it's driving a block, or two blocks lives are in great danger. You should think of the consequences before doing what you know can harm your life. Also, you should be a good role model for people who know you and look up to you. Don't make a bad impression and give yourself a bad reputation just because alcohol got the best of you.

Mariah's Challenge has not only affected my life but many others also. It proved that one wrong decision can hurt so many people. That it can change your life forever. No matter how well you are doing in life that one wrong decision will throw that all away. The goals you've always dreamed of full filling are gone, and there is nothing you can do to get them back. Instead, you will be living with regret your whole life. You will be paying for what you have done.

Mariah's Challenge taught me right from wrong. I don't drink because I know what my consequences could be. Instead of hurting myself and others around me, I move forward with my life and full fill my dreams and goals. I know I am going a lot farther then the people who

You don't know what you have till it is gone

Alcohol is a simple seven letter word. The word has multiple meanings and uses. Although one thing they don't put in the dictionary is how this substance change your life in a split second. Do these books mention the dangers or the warning signs of this substance? This was the question I asked my dad as a young child, because even at five years old I never thought a word such as alcohol would have such a huge impact on my life. That was until one late September night that changed everything. This was the night that my mom got into a drunken driving accident.

First, I should give you a little background on the incident. My parents for the past few months prior to what happened had been a little rocky. They always seemed to be arguing about everything that was brought, even the littlest things. That was the reason why my mother was going to spend a week with her friend Jo Anna in Utah, but at this time I did not understand why she was leaving. I remember her saying she needed to clear her head and set some things straight. My mom called my brother, sister, and me every day to tell us what she was doing, how much fun she was having, and that she missed us dearly. She also promised presents when she came back and so soon enough she was home again. So as soon as I knew it she was home with many presents even the pink slug bug Barbie car I had been begging for quite some time now. My parents then brought me upstairs for bed and I thought to myself it was one of the best days of my life. When I was falling asleep I was thinking that day was done my mom was home we all got presents and all was well, little did I know that my mom's night was just starting.

The next day, Saturday, started out like any other except it wasn't my dad was at the table drinking a cup of coffee it was my grandpa. Well, he went on to make me breakfast and I watch my annual weekend cartoons. Finally after finished I went to go see why my mom wasn't up, she always slept in late but never this late. I went into her room and I couldn't find her which I thought was oddly weird, that never happens and especially since she had just got home the night before from a long trip. Then I went in the kitchen and slumped down in the chair to think about what was going on. Just then my dad walked in, he looked exhausted and frazzled and I knew something was terribly wrong by the look on his face and just then he told me to go get my brother and sister. My mind was going crazy wondering about all the possible scenarios, and that is finally when all three of us sat down at the table. We all were bright eyed and sleepy from the night before, my dad then went on to tell us that our mom had went out the bar after her and my dad got into fight. She had consumed too much alcohol and got into her truck and tried to drive home, but on her way home she ran into a house and killed a man. At this point panic was running through my whole body I was scared of my own mom and let me tell you there is nothing worse than that feeling. My dad told us to get packed that we would be staying at our aunt's house for the day. All I could think of is how my world was falling apart piece by piece and how I need to get away from everyone.

The next couple months a lot of things happened and my life changed forever. I never thought people would treat me differently, but they did. For instance, I had just started the first grade and I asked a girl if she like to swing on the swing set. She said she couldn't hang out with me because my mom had killed someone and her mom said I was a bad person because I was related to her. I couldn't understand what I had done

wrong; all I can remember is walking home crying because I knew my mom was a good person. I can even remember people walked around me like I had a bad disease, it was like if they got to close something bad would happen to them. Teachers, my friend's parents, and people who cared about us always called to check on my family and me and see how we were doing. People walked around us like they were walking on eggs shells or they would whisper behind your back like a bad episode of gossip girl. It took a long time to figure out why people had treated my family this way, especially my mom that now I understand now.

At this point is when I made vow to myself, to not let anything or anyone get in my way of who I am. People will always talk and mistakes will be made, but the difference is I will not let these things define me. I learned a valuable lesson about alcohol that drinking and driving that day. I learned accidents do happen to people and it can happen to anyone, even me. Although, I know many of you may not care about my story I just hope you take one second to stop and listen. You never know maybe you can save someone's life; it may even be your own. Also, I'd like to thank my mom because even though a lot of bad has came out of this situation but also some good has to. I am extremely proud of my mom she completely turned her life around and has been sober of ten years now. I hope all of you on day have an experience that changes your life for the better just like this one has for me. This is the reason why I Sarie Marie Nicholls have accepted Mariah's Challenge over four years ago and will continue to lead in these footsteps.

How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life?

My life was forever changed when I found out about the accident involving Mariah. I put myself in her and her families place and thought about how horrible it must have been to lose your life at such a young age. I also put myself in the drivers place and immediately felt sick to my stomach. After hearing about Mariah, I vowed to never drink and drive. When Mr. McCarthy visited our school, I took Mariah's Challenge. Many of my fellow classmates also took the challenge but have failed to follow through. That day was a very important day in my life. I felt like I was not only saving my life, but possibly saving another persons life.

When I hear stories about people drinking and driving, they are always told like it is something to be laughed at. I overhear people laughing and making fun of the person who slid into a ditch or ran into a fence. I can't stand to hear theses stories because one day they might not be talking about running into a fence, they could be talking about running into a person. They definitely won't be laughing about it when they have to go to a funeral or are behind bars.

Accepting Mariah's challenge opened my eyes to the realities of drinking and driving. Life is a very precious thing and a careless mistake could change the lives of many people forever.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in multiple ways. I believe that since Mariah's Challenge came, my life so far has changed in many positive and negative ways, but has been meaningful and exciting. From my freshman year, to now my senior year of high school, I have learned who I truly am because of Mariah's Challenge. I have also learned who my true friends are, and how to distinguish honest people from a crowd. I'm definitely a leader, not a follower and I don't look down on others. I would classify myself as a team leader. My high school experience so far has been filled with stressful moments and peaceful moments, but I look back with no regrets. I try to look at the positive sides of things and not the negatives. I show a lot of motivation and cooperation to things I want to achieve in life, which makes me feel that I am a very responsible and goal driven individual. I have learned to regard every life experience as if I have nothing to lose and so much to gain through the experience itself. I have learned to stand by my beliefs and to fight for what is right for me to accomplish my dreams.

Lastly, Mariah's Challenge made me take some pride in my community. There is not one free spay a neuter clinic, for low income patrons, you wouldn't see me at. I help recover dogs and cats after they have been fixed because I have so much love for animals. I also help The Butte YMCA with many tasks; my favorite being teaching young kids how to swim. Softball is my life, and I am one of a couple stand outs on my team. I have lettered two years now and will be soon lettering my third time this year. As a team leader I encourage everyone on my team to stay substance free and come to my house on St. Patrick's Day for a substance free party. Also, I help out Mile High Little League Softball and Baseball clean up their fields during the summer.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life

My first exposure to Mariah’s Challenge occurred in junior high after the tragedy that took Mariah’s life. My dad explained to me how making a single bad decision can impact the lives of many people. It really made me think about my future. I have since challenged myself to set a pattern of making the right decisions and have goals not only for myself but my peers as well. The work of Mariah’s Challenge has provided a positive direction regarding drinking and driving and convincing people of all ages it should not be tolerated.

After nearly four years of high school, I am amazed at the number of young people who have taken this challenge and are a voice for others. Mariah’s Challenge continues to grow in strength and has become a visible educational tool used to change the mentality and culture of people in the state of Montana. It has not been an easy task, but the fortitude of its founders is unmatched. This grass roots effort has expanded and the support provided by all entities is amazing.

The impact of Mariah’s Challenge can be felt with people of all generations. The culture of drinking and driving can no longer be accepted. I am proud of the great efforts made by Mariah’s Challenge and the community of Butte in being the leaders for change. Mariah’s Challenge continues to provide young people not only educational material regarding right decisions, but true values that can be used for a lifetime. I am proud to have taken the Challenge.

HOW MARIAH'S CHALLENGE CHANGED MY LIFE

Mariah's challenge changed my life and all the residents of Butte, Montana in a blink of an eye. Not only did this stupid mistake take the life of an innocent girl, it also devastated her family and friends. The man's life also will never be the same as it will not be for his family either. Both parties involved will never be the same. I am proud to be a member of the Butte community because they always seem to come together in tough times and make a positive out of a negative.

I have always chosen not to drink and Mariah's challenge helped me stay true to this. As a high school student in Butte, there is not a lot of things for us to do and I know that is why a lot of the kids drink. I have kept myself busy with things I love to do. I was a member of the golf team, played intramural basketball, a member of the National Honor Society and part of the Talent Search. I have also worked 30 plus hours a week since I was a freshman. In my spare time I love to hunt, fish, and camp with my family and friends. I know all of these things keep me out trouble. I have never fallen into the pure pressure and I thank my family for that.

I personally feel that drinking is stupid and a waste of money. Why would anyone want to go get so drunk they can't walk and the next day they can't see because their head hurts so badly? Then you have the people who think they can drive even when they can't walk. I understand that drinking is a part of life and in Butte it seems like there is a lot more of it. We have a bar just about on every corner. Some people blame the Irish tradition but I think it is all in everyone's head and we as adults should know right from wrong.

I believe that the challenge has helped the Butte community and I thank all that is involved for all you have done. I know that it is always in the back of my head and I would never want my family to go through what either family has been through because of this tragedy. For the sake of the kids in Butte I really hope that they keep enforcing the MIP's and reminding all of them of the damage it does to everyone involved.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

I never personally knew Mariah McCarthy, but I do remember the day when the tragic events happened on October 28, 2001 that took her life due to an under-aged driver who had been drinking. There was a swarm of text messages that flooded most young teenagers' cell phones living in our community that announced the tragic loss of Mariah. I remember thinking to myself how horrible this would be if it happened to me or anyone that I loved. For the next several weeks that was much sorrow in Butte and many unanswered questions of how this horrific event could happen in a community like ours. Mariah's family started a campaign to memorialize her life by challenging teenagers and young adults to refrain from drinking underage. I took this challenge personally and vowed to never drink underage and to never drive under the influence of alcohol at any age.

Living in Butte all my life I have seen the use of alcohol be abused in people's lives of all ages. The peer pressure of being a teenager in a community where drinking has been so prevalent in the past has been a challenge in and of itself. But I whole heartedly believe that Mariah's Challenge has caused me and my friends to think about the consequences of actions and that life can change so quickly based on these actions. Mariah's Challenge has made me a better person, has caused me to be thankful for what I do have, and thought me to not take the gift of life for granted. Thank you, Mariah's Challenge, for changing my life.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in an number of way . Since May 19, 2010 when I accepted Mariah's challenge . I have become more active member in the Butte Silverbow community just this fall I drove the S-125 genie boom lift up the continental divide to paint the Lady of the Rockies and also painted the Lady from the waist down . I Jason Simon promised to myself and the community that I would not drink till I am of age and I have upheld my promise till this day and I will continue till I am of age and never to drink and drive when I am of age to drink. I also help with any Maintenance on the Lady of the Rockies and their pasty sale during the school year and work the folk festivals during the summer. I have lost one of my best friends Cullan Berry and now I know how frail life is and how we have to do anything to protect it. My family and I are working on a project that will benefit the whole town and intern the whole state of Montana. we have been working on this project for the last 10 years . We need to get these kids off the streets. the only reason why kids start drinking is because there is nothing to do in this town and this project will eliminate a majority of teenagers drinking just to have fun. I hope soon that we will be able to join forces and stop teenage drinking once and for all.

thank You,

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Many of us in America love to be snoopers when it comes to our relatives. I can vividly remember the day that Mariah died and the pain it brought to my brother because I had his cell phone on hand when he received the text message that one of his childhood friends had passed away. My family and I moved to Butte when my brother Ethan was in third grade. He had Mariah in several of his classes in grade school and throughout middle school.

It was October 28, 2007 and we were at Great Falls High for a swim meet that my brother was competing in. He had just left for a race and left his cell phone on the ground by me. I saw that he got a text message from a friend alerting him of Mariah's death. I instantly went to my parents to alert them to what had happened, and they were the ones that informed Ethan of what was going on. I saw the pain on his face to the news that he had lost a classmate.

If I could, I would prevent everyone in the world from that sort of pain. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because it raises awareness to the pain that drinking can bring to people. It literally can tear families apart. Mariah's Challenge has made me want to be a better person and avoid the use of alcohol so that I can avoid bringing the type of pain I saw that day on my brother's face. For me, Mariah's Challenge has provided me with a way to help myself, within my family and community, obtain the goal of preventing the pain brought on by drinking.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

When I accepted Mariah's Challenge in April of 2008, I couldn't begin to fathom the impact it would have on me and those around me. I had always promised myself that drugs and alcohol would never be a part of my life, whether it was legal for me to do so or not. But growing up, I always felt that I was standing alone. After Mariah's tragic death, the creation of Mariah's Challenge was a testament to me that I was not alone. There were people fighting the personal battle against underage drinking and were ready to take a stand against drinking and driving.

But one of the most important things that changed my life were the examples that Valarie Kilmer and Kaitlyn Okrusch set for those around them. They displayed the type of person I wanted to be.

I had the opportunity to have a math class my freshman year with Valarie and her attitude was amazing. She was happy and friendly to everyone around her. She made my freshman year so much easier. Kaitlyn also holds a special place in my heart. During Speech, she took me under her wing, always having my back while taking care of the team, constantly being a friend and showing happiness.

Though I was not given the precious opportunity to meet Mariah, I believe her spirit lives through the examples of these two amazing girls. This challenge has made me more courageous, to stand for what is right because you will never be alone. I truly am grateful for this Challenge and the change it provoked in me, to set the example to those around me that underage drinking is wrong, drinking and driving is a crime, and to live a responsible life making sure that something like this never happens again.

How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life

Mariah's tragic story could have been anyone's story, sadly but true. Whether Mariah, her friends, myself and my friends, a person should feel safe whether it be walking from one house to another or what ever we choose. We should be able to be kids and enjoy outside activities without the consequences of a tragedy occurring.

I believe in order for that to happen, changes have to occur. The awareness with Mariah's challenge has been one of them. Throughout my high school years I have heard, seen and attended school activities related to Mariah's challenge. It is too bad that a tragedy has to occur, in order for more people to make a change in their lives and to help prevent a repeat of tragedy. I feel, I have made better choices overall ~~just from~~ the increased awareness that has been made available to myself and my peers, over my high school years.

I feel another change that needs to be made is the consequences for drinking and driving. For instance, someone's first offense with drinking and driving should initially be given harsher consequences in order to possibly prevent yet another tragic occurrence. If given a harsher punishment for a persons first offense, hopefully it will demonstrate and cause a domino effect to others that it is not worth the risk to jeopardize their life and the life of others.

I honestly don't know what the answers are nor do many of us, but if we all continue to try our best to be role models for the young and old alike, as we follow the standards set with Mariah's challenge then maybe we can prevent even if just one more tragic occurrence.

Thank you for your time and your consideration for allowing me to apply for this most rewarding scholarship.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

I remember that day like I'm positive a lot of teenagers do. I was in the eighth grade and really didn't know what was going on. There is always talking, especially when it had to do with the high school. It wasn't until later that I truly realized and understood what had happened. That day Butte lost a

very bright, young, and intelligent woman. This day brought heartache to the people of Butte and out of it made something stronger than anything before. It made a pledge. Mariah's Challenge changed my life in a way I didn't think possible. It showed me the scary effect of alcohol and gave me something to stand for. I never knew that you only had to go online to take the pledge, but after listening to Leo McCarthy and Jim Kilmer speak I told myself I would never be the devastation to a family, or a friend lost to someone because of alcohol. People always talk and think that they are so cool because they spend their weekends drinking and partying, but that truly isn't the case. You don't need to drink to have fun. Those girls that day weren't drinking to have fun, yet they were punished. Mariah's Challenge is a symbol and icon to all youth, especially me, to strive to be the best I can be, and that is without the consumption of alcohol.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Butte, Montana is a great place. Full of wonderful people, places, and sights. However, Butte has also developed a darker side for which it is known. Many people think of Butte as a party place full of drinking. I think this really came to be after the tragic events that happened on October 28, 2007. What happened that day I will remember the rest of my life. As I heard the news, I remember how it impacted our family, and knowing the girls made it even worse.

Mariah's Challenge has done numerous things for our small town and has brought awareness to the problem of drinking and driving. Many people believe in this cause because of what you did - instead of begging for sorrow, you asked for followers and I am one! As I get older, I realize I can wait until I am twenty-one to drink. Underage drinking is nothing to break the law for. And it is certainly nothing to risk your life or someone else's life for.

Many students in our school are learning that drinking is not everything, and that there are other ways to have fun. I, personally, find no humor in listening to how drunk a classmate got at a party. Unfortunately, there will always be kids that drink. But I, for one, will be working to hopefully put those people in the minority. We can change a town.

I would personally like to thank you Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Kilmer, and Mr. Okrusch for having such bravery and courage to stand up to something so big for your families and for our community. I want to say congratulations on being selected as a CNN hero. You are truly making this town a better place to live. I am proud to be a resident of Butte, Montana.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I was in the 7th grade when my family got the call that Kaitlyn had been hit by a drunk driver. It seemed unreal that something like this could happen in our small town and to someone that I personally knew; my cousin. The one thing that kept going through my head was why had such a horrible tragedy happened to these innocent girls? Hearing Leo McCarthy speak at my eighth grade TIP lock-in was one of the most heartbreaking experiences I have ever gone through. It made me really think about my future choices for myself. Why would someone deliberately put a substance into their body when they know how badly it could harm them? This is the question that goes unanswered in my head when the weekend comes and many of the teenagers at school talk about going to parties to drink.

Because of the creation of Mariah's Challenge, I knew that I didn't want to drink until I was legally able to. I wouldn't be that one person that made a stupid decision that affected everyone. I have vowed to accept Mariah's Challenge, which includes not drinking until I am of the age twenty-one and never getting in a car with someone that has been drinking. I will also never let myself or somebody else drive drunk.

I have been a TIP counselor and mentor for the past four years because I strongly hope that I can make a difference in a younger person's decision to drink or not. I also hope to be a role model for my younger sister who is a freshman this year. My choice to not drink has positively affected the rest of my teenage years, and I am still completely at peace with that decision.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has been a great asset to the Butte community. It has helped many people, myself included, to realize that we have no guarantees of how our life will turn out. There is no time like the present to make the changes we need in our life. We have one chance to make good choices. The sooner we realize that the choices we make not only effect ourselves but those around us.

I glad to see someone make this challenge to us as students. I personally made a decision a long time ago to not get involved with alcohol or drugs, but I have several friends who needed someone to challenge them in this way. It has had a profound effect on several students in the Butte area, my friends included.

My personal thought on this is that even if only one life is changed or one life is saved, it is worth it all. Choices determine who we become. If good choices can be made at this time in my life, hopefully we, as adults, will continue to make these good choices. Thank you for investing in the lives of students in a powerful way-mine included!

How Mariah's Challenge has changed my Life

Until I went to high school I never realized how big of an issue underage drinking was. I can remember the first time I found out that someone I was close with was using illegal substances and I was absolutely shocked to find out that, in fact, most of the people I was sitting by in class were doing just the same. I was so naïve when I had made a documented decision in the 7th grade to accept Mariah's Challenge. I chose to accept Mariah's Challenge not only because the challenge lined up with my morals, but I also made this choice for my health, and as a step to strive to be the best that I could be. Something that I didn't realize in middle school was that choosing to abstain from illegal substance would make me stand out from most of the student body, resulting in four years of lonely weekends and a roller coaster of emotions as well. Although this could potentially sound like a negative situation, I learned to use this choice of accepting Mariah's Challenge to influence others in a positive way. The influence I had on others was not made revolutionary through large groups within the school, but rather in small, one on one, moments with many different students throughout the years. From movie nights and ice cream dates to Miss Montana and adventures in the mountains, I was able to reach many students because they noticed that I was confident enough in who I was to be able to remove myself from a situation that I was uncomfortable with. I was provided the opportunity to encourage others to make the same choice that I had. The result of this movement of "moments" was memories that were not quickly forgotten. This is how Mariah's Challenge has changed my life.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge is important because it gives an important message on why drinking and driving is bad. Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life because it teaches me the dangers of alcohol and how to have fun without being intoxicated. I’ve learned that there are more important things to do instead of drinking, people can have fun without alcohol and that is how I spend my time. When my friends are drinking, I always find something else to do but I make sure that they call me for a ride because I do not want them putting their lives in danger or other people’s lives. It has changed my life because after the fatal accident that took Mariah’s life I realized that life is too precious and it does not deserve to be taken away by the stupid decision of drinking and driving.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

People who know the story of Mariah's accident know how heartbreaking it is. There are many people who didn't know of her; me being one of them. After the tragic event her name was everywhere. People who had no idea of her existence knew about her then. Her story made an impact on this city, this state, and slowly across the country. I believe this movement that Leo is doing is incredible and has definitely impacted many lives, including mine. My outlook on alcohol is simple; I think it's a useless substance. I personally don't see any reason to want to consume any of it. I do realize my opinion isn't the same with most people considering many people drink. This is why I believe Mariah's Challenge is an excellent program and I support it with all my heart. I've never had anyone in my family get into an accident related to alcohol but I do know there are families all over the world who suffer from them every day. I can't even fathom how they feel; especially people who go through what Leo had to. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by making every day safer than before. With all the people accepting the challenge comes less alcohol related accidents. I've made a vow to myself that I will never drink and drive, and when surrounded by people who have been imbibing I will always make myself available to drive anyone home so that everyone arrives safely. This program has helped me change my outlook on the simple things that can be done to save a person's life. No matter what, I will always support this life changing movement. I, Haley Knight, accept Mariah's Challenge.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I accepted Mariah’s Challenge when I was in the seventh grade. My classmates and I all accepted the challenge together. I believe that the message of Mariah’s Challenge is a great because it is simple. Do not break the law. If you follow the law, then you not only get a scholarship, but you also honor Mariah McCarthy. Mariah’s Challenge has helped me stay on the right path throughout Jr. High and High School. The temptations of drinking have certainly been present, but I have been able to refrain from alcohol and illegal drugs pretty easily by surrounding myself with the right people. My family and friends do not pressure me into drinking in anyway. Mariah’s Challenge has certainly made a difference in not only Butte, but other parts of the state as well. I am positive that the challenge has brought positive things to the community of Butte. I hope that the teenage individuals in Butte and elsewhere respect the challenge and appreciate what the community has gone through in order to make it happen. The Challenge has certainly changed the way that I think about drinking. My perspective has changed and that is a wonderful thing. I plan to uphold the challenge until I do become of age to drink. The experience is one that I believe has been a gratifying one and one that I want to continue. Mariah’s Challenge has affected my life in a positive way by keeping me safe along with making me follow the law. It has changed my perspective on drinking and especially drinking and driving. The change has been a gratifying one.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge is a prevention program that has changed the way a lot of people think about underage drinking and drinking and driving. Almost five and a half years ago there was a tragedy that shook the whole community of Butte. I remember myself as a seventh grader when I accepted the challenge. I did it for a couple important reasons like to guarantee that I never take a life drinking and driving and to help change the underage drinking culture in Butte. Around the time I took the challenge I experienced firsthand in my own family how the misuse of alcohol could not only hurt the person doing it, but also everyone around them. This helped me come to the conclusion that just accepting Mariah's Challenge is not enough. I joined a couple groups to help in battle against underage drinking and drinking and driving. The first group I joined was a Mariah's Challenge group within my school called Mariah's Maroons. In Mariah's Maroons I preached the dangers of underage drinking and drinking and driving within my school and encouraged interested students to accept the challenge and join our club. A group I joined shortly after was Butte Cares. In Butte Cares other student members and I did things such as chemical-free parties on New Year's Eve to give the youth in the community a place to go on night that a lot of drinking occurs. I hope my work in both these clubs have made a difference in our community. I glad to say that Mariah's Challenge did not only help me decide how I was going to live my life but also inspire me to reach out and try to make a difference in my community.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I was only 12 years old when Mariah died, but the aftermath of those events are something that I have never forgotten. I can say with upmost certainty that without Mariah's Challenge, I would be a very different person. I can say with pride that never once have I used any type of drugs or alcohol, thanks in large part to Mariah's Challenge. It certainly was not an easy thing to do growing up in Butte, but with the support of my friends and family, it was something that I was able to accomplish.

I've seen many of my friends turn to alcohol and drugs during their time in high school, and it honestly has changed them for the worse. I understand how easy it can be to turn to these activities in times of boredom, but I think that is too easy of an excuse. What it comes down to is not only a commitment to Mariah's Challenge, but a commitment to oneself. I have made the decision to accept the challenge because I do want to see change in the drinking culture of this community.

Ultimately, without Mariah's Challenge, I have no idea where I would be in my life. Both sides of my family have an alcoholic past, but I have decided that is not going to be what defines me as a person. Everyone in this community has seen firsthand what can happen when alcohol is abused, but so many simply look the other way. I understand that the individuals who have accepted and followed Mariah's Challenge are the minority, but I see only a bright future when it comes to the drinking culture of this town. Many students like myself have accepted the challenge, and if Mariah's challenge has saved a single life, which I believe it has, then it has been an overwhelming success.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Through Mariah's Challenge I have learned many of the important facts and issues regarding substance abuse and the use of any motorized vehicle while under the influence. Because of the actions of the Mariah's Challenge organization, I have chosen to remain alcohol and drug free throughout my life. This is also partly due to the prevalence of alcoholism in my family. Drinking will not only cause the mind to become less controlled, but will also change the rational and personality of the intoxicated individual. This thereby decreases motor skills and the individual becomes another weapon in the presence of the innocent. Because of these facts that have been brought into not only my life, but the lives of much of the youth in Butte and the world thanks to the Mariah's Challenge Team, I have devoted to choosing the safe road in life and choosing success rather than disaster. This includes being a designated driver for those in need, as well as choosing to put my own safety above those of others. Over my entire high school career I have been offered the chance to participate in many parties and engagements where alcohol and illegal drugs were present. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge I knew better than to put myself into a dangerous situation I may regret. Mariah's Challenge has targeted the youth of our country, the ultimate source of our future. Due to this program I have ultimately learned that I can only control myself, and that is where the true power in this fight lives. If even one person takes the challenge and chooses to remain faithful, than how many lives are being saved? The answer: Endless.

“How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Every twenty-two minutes, a person is pronounced dead from an alcohol-related car accident. That is approximately 2-3 people an hour, 65 people a day, 455 people a week, 1,950 people a month, and 23,725 people a year. I made the decision to not be one of these statistics.

It has always been pretty easy for me to say “no” to alcohol. I never ran with the “popular crowd,” most of which would find any excuse to party and drink. Instead, most of my friends are non-drinkers as well, so together we find other things to do rather than go out and drink. However, that does not mean that I have not had the temptation to try a few every now and then. And if it wasn't for Mariah's Challenge, I probably would have.

Because Mariah's Challenge awards scholarships to those who complete high school without drinking or driving under the influence, it became my goal to take this challenge and face it head on. I knew that if I kept this promise, not only would I be helping myself by receiving a scholarship for college, but I would also not be breaking the law, I would be keeping myself safe from the harms of alcohol, and also keeping others safe, whom I may have hurt if I had been under the influence.

If I had never accepted Mariah's Challenge, I may have very well gone out drinking one night, and ended up being one of those statistics. But because I accepted her challenge, I have a full life ahead of me with a countless number of opportunities, undaunted by any alcohol that could have changed the course of my life forever. Because of this I am proud to say, “I accept Mariah's Challenge.”

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

It started out when I was in the 7th or 8th grade, when a beautiful life ended too soon. From what I can remember about Mariah was that she was my brother’s age and was a benevolent young girl. It’s unfortunate that one person’s mistake can take another’s life away, and almost two more. I am against underage drinking and drunk driving for so many reasons. It’s selfish for people to think about themselves only when they make that decision to put others in that factor of danger without realizing the consequences.

After the Mariah’s Challenge came out I was so touched. Of course I accepted the challenge to help support our community. It hadn’t really occurred to me yet just what it was I specifically accepted in the challenge. But, as I grew older and detected more of the facts, I was shocked with the community of Butte and how high the rates of underage drinking and drunk driving were. I wanted to help spread the word to teenagers and younger kids to help influence them to accept the challenge to not underage drink.

I have had situations happen to me where I will get a call or text from a friend or family member where they were out drinking, so I will always go pick them up to avoid drinking and driving. Along with that I have found and stuck with the same group of friends and learned that we don’t need alcohol to have fun. We can just watch movies, go hot tubing, and laugh at things that we can remember from the night before. As a teenager I understand that underage drinking still happens. But I refuse to do that, even if it means that you’re in the “cool kids” group. I will always say no to underage drinking and drinking and driving.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I am from Butte, MT. It is a small town where everyone knows everyone. The stereotype of people here are tough, rough, and drunk. Many times it is said, "There is nothing to do in Butte except for to drink." In some instances that is true; there is not many activities for young people and teenagers to do in Butte, but drinking underage is never the answer. People can always find something to do that does not involve drinking and is still a lot of fun.

I was in seventh grade at East Middle School when Mariah died. I can remember for weeks it was all people talked about. It was such a terrible event for the community. Valerie, Kaitlyn, Mariah, and their families were and are much loved. As I continued to grow up I have heard Leo, Valerie and Kaitlyn, and Jimm talk about that night and what they have been through. Every time I hear that story it breaks my heart knowing that so many good people had to be hurt from one person's stupid mistake.

Mariah's Challenge has helped me understand how one mistake or one wrong move can change so many people's lives. It has changed my life in helping me say no to the peer pressure that comes along with high school concerning drugs and alcohol. I do not want to be the person that puts families and communities through the hard times that went on with the accident involving Mariah. I have stayed drug and alcohol free my whole life and hope to stay that way. I try to promote others who have taken the challenge to stay drug and alcohol free. Mariah's Challenge has helped teens like me stay away from the pressures, and we teens also try to keep promoting not doing drugs and alcohol to others and especially not drinking and driving.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in monumental ways. Mariah's Challenge has changed my individual life as well as changed the Butte Community. Both changes have been for the betterment of the Butte community and me.

I can still remember when the tragic accident took place during my seventh grade year. As I watched the news, I couldn't help but wonder how something so tragic could occur in Butte's tight knit community. As I grew older I was able to see that every community has flaws, and one of Butte's flaws was drinking. This realization only made me want to uphold my commitment to Mariah's Challenge even more. Now as a graduating senior, I have upheld that commitment. My parents, Mariah's Challenge, and my morals have kept me away from both alcohol and drugs and have made me who I am today. I am proud to be part of Mariah's Challenge and will continue to uphold the challenge throughout my life.

Mariah's Challenge has also changed my life through the affect it has had on the Butte Community. Butte's reaction to tragedy that took place in 2007 was the spark to develop a better community. Butte has since changed for the better. While there are still problems in Butte, many individuals have elected to not only accept Mariah's Challenge but also to uphold it, just as I have. The positive changes the Challenge has created are overwhelming and continue to make Butte "The Richest Hill on Earth."

To conclude, Mariah's Challenge has changed my life for the better. Not only have I upheld the Challenge, but much of the Butte community has as well. It is due to changes the Challenge sparks that Mariah's Challenge is one of the most inspiring organizations in the United States.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has played a major role in my life. I grew up around drugs and alcohol, and Mariah's Challenge has given me the motivation to stay drug and alcohol free. My dad drank a lot around me when I was little, and my parents fought a lot because of him coming home drunk. My mom and dad got divorced when I was in 3rd grade because of his alcohol use. I told myself when I was little, that I never wanted to be like that, or have a family like that. He still drinks, but not as much as he used to. Which still isn't ok, but it is the lifestyle he has chosen, and he hasn't asked for any help with his problem. I always tell him that he needs to pull his life together for me and my 5 year old sister, but he needs help doing it. My mom is now remarried and my step-dad is an amazing man and has always given me opportunities to go out and do things with him. That has helped me stay away from old friend's who are now abusing alcohol and drugs. When I was younger, my uncle was always under the influence of drugs and alcohol. He took his own life in 2007, because he couldn't handle the life that he had created for himself. He was an amazing man when he wasn't under the influence, but when he had drugs in his system, he wasn't the uncle that I knew and loved. It was like he turned into an alien in my eyes. I didn't like being around him because it scared me. I would lay in bed at night and pray that he would live another day, because he would be so strung out on drugs, that I wasn't sure if he was going to live to be another day older.

Mariah's Challenge has given me the motivation also to stay away from peer pressure. A lot of kids in my grade choose to go to parties on the weekends. They say that there isn't

anything to do around Butte, but honestly it isn't that hard to find something to do. I go to the movies, ride my four-wheeler, and spend time with my family, rather than going out drinking and making a fool of myself. If Mariah's Challenge was not created and I didn't accept the challenge, I probably would have given into peer pressure. I can proudly say that through all that I have been through, I have never been under the influence of drugs or alcohol. I plan to stay drug and alcohol free for the rest of my life. I only see negative experiences come from these substances, and that is why I choose this decision. I proudly accept Mariah's Challenge because of these reasons. Mr. McCarthy, I am also very sorry for your loss. I know how hard it is to lose someone because of their own poor choices, but in your case someone else's poor judgment. I thank you for creating this program to reward and motivate students like me who have chosen to stay drug and alcohol free.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I'm going to be honest; nothing in the world could ever make me want to drink alcohol and then drive. That's just not who I am, nor who I will ever be. This is not to say Mariah's Challenge hasn't changed my life, because it most certainly has.

I think no parent should ever have to go through something as tragic as that, no person should have to leave Earth in that way. It just shouldn't happen.

My dad and my stepmom were both working in the hospital that tragic night, and got to experience firsthand how terrifying and heart wrenching that situation is and was. They can't tell me much about it, but they have told me how incredibly hard it was to be there.

I don't ever want any person to have to deal with that sort of situation; not parents, not youth, not hospital employees, not a community, and not a state. It makes me want to go out there and stop every single person who has ever driven drunk, to help them realize what a huge mistake and risk they're making.

The sad thing is I can't reach out to every person like that. All I can do is tell the people that I know that I'm there for them and be the person they can call at three in the morning if they need a ride home. The only other thing I can do beyond that is set a good example. When others see how I act, they just might be inspired and want to become like me. I find that with a positive mind set, you can change the world so much faster than anyone would ever think. All it takes is a positive attitude and a good example.

Thank you for your consideration.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed many lives including my own. It has shown the community of Butte as well as other communities that it is depraved to drink and drive or to do illegal drugs. Mariah's Challenge changed my life because I have realized that there is nothing wrong with not drinking. I always feel out of place because I have ~~never wanted to drink~~. It always seemed immature or a waste to me.

People my age always use the saying there is nothing to do in Butte, Montana as an excuse to go drink. There are plenty of things to do in Butte. Agreed, one will not find a big fancy amusement park or something as marvelous as the Eiffel Tower in Butte, but we do have many events that no other places have. Butte might not be a big town, but having nothing to do is a poor excuse. Many adults as well as adolescents think that getting in a wreck will not happen to them, but unfortunate things happen to everyone. Why would anyone want to chance taking someone else's life? Mariah's Challenge has made me more aware of the negative effects of alcohol and illegal drugs, and has made me become more responsible for my own actions. I have seen what it has done to the victim's families. I know for a fact that I never want to be responsible for a family to lose a loved one due to my ignorant actions.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Accidents happen all the time. However, a lot of accidents can be prevented. On October 28, 2007 the entire community of Butte felt the impact of a terrible accident. Three young girls were hit by a truck, and one of the girls' lives was taken. The driver of the vehicle was a minor driving while under the influence. This tragedy showed me the positive force of drinking responsibly and only at a legal age, and that I can prevent accidents by simply making good choices.

In a high school atmosphere there are many pressures. Drinking is one of them. I'll admit, there have been times I wanted to be one of the "cool kids" or know what drinking would feel like. Mariah's Challenge kept me from making those bad decisions. Mariah's Challenge taught me that one person's choices could affect a multitude of people. When the incident occurred that sparked the start of Mariah's Challenge the family and friends of the Mariah had to learn to go on without more than just a person, but a daughter, friend, and angel. The other two girls not only had their friend taken from them, but had to go through physical and mental anguish. The driver of the truck will forever be identified as the man who took so much from so many simply because he chose to drink and get behind the wheel. Being cool is not worth risking the lives of yourself and others.

The community of Butte didn't deserve to have those young lives altered by one person's choice. Mariah's Challenge has shown that even my choices matter. I can prevent accidents from happening everyday by not participating in underage drinking, not driving under the influence, and by being a good example for others.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I like to think East Middle School mistreated me, but to be frank I loved school. I loved everything about my care-free twelfth year of life. As October came upon us the school started to buzz with excitement for Halloween, trick-or-treating, candy, and costumes! The students were happy, light-hearted. It wasn't until just before Halloween that we got the news of a terrible incident that would forever change not only me, but the entire city.

As a kid in middle school, I couldn't get past the confusion. I couldn't comprehend the death of an innocent child, as I was still an innocent child myself. Death, in my mind, was reserved for the elderly that lived full lives and pets that grew too weak. This wasn't right, it wasn't supposed to happen. My older sister, Cheyenne, knew Jenna and the Kilmer family, although I'm not sure how well. Still, that made it worse. I didn't want to know the horrors that really happened. I didn't want to know the pain people felt because of them. It was all too much for me. My sister and I bought flowers and together attended a party for Jenna, one to keep her in high spirits after the tragedy and to bring a sense of togetherness. We left soon after arriving. The sadness in everybody's eyes, the fake smiles on their faces, the heavy hearts they carried- it was something we didn't want to take part in. My sister cried when she got in the car and I sat silently trying to think of something to say. I never did think of anything. I didn't know Mariah; I don't believe Cheyenne did either. After escaping the party we went to the hospital to visit Valerie. I felt like an intruder, not knowing this little, tired body lying on the bed, but I felt happy to know that she was actually there, on a hospital bed, and not somewhere colder. My young mind kept going back to the thought, "It's too bad she's missing the party," despite the fact I had just darted right out of that party.

Remembering what happened that night gave me a tangible sense of life and how it can be cut short by irresponsible decisions made when under the influence. A few weeks later

I took the Mariah's Challenge at school. The challenge has given me additional incentive to my parents who always preached against underage drinking and to refrain from the weakness of giving in to peer-pressure. It drives home the notion that underage drinking is wrong, but it also gives a reward for abstaining from illegal substances. In addition to my own morals, I knew I needed to choose the alternative to underage drinking because I have always known paying for college would not be easy. The scholarship requires nothing more of me than to make healthy choices that benefit me and those around me. I am proud to be a part of a community that is striving to make a difference in underage drinking.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Although I never knew Mariah personally, I had friends that were close to her. The day after the accident was a tragic day for many people. Everywhere I looked or went people in the community were just completely heartbroken and confused about how this could happen to a young girl with a lot of potential. Hearing about how amazing of a person Mariah was and what had happened crushed me. A young girl that was talked so highly of by so many did not deserve this terrible fate.

After Mariah's accident the community, as a whole, changed. The making of Mariah's Challenge was the best thing that could have come from the accident. Listening to Leo McCarthy talk and watching him on TV over the years has inspired me to speak out for what I believe in. Not only that, but the Challenge and heartbreak of everyone after the accident taught me that drinking is pointless. Many people do not understand that drinking does not just affect them but everyone around them. Throughout high school I have been a pretty reserved kid, staying away from parties and drinking. The main reason I believe that high school has been this way for me is due to the fact that Mariah's Challenge has stood out in my life.

As I said earlier I did not personally know Mariah but hearing about her made me wonder how this could happen. Not knowing how else to show that I am supportive of Mariah's Challenge I do not drink or go to parties. Many other students find this weird and give me a hard time for not going and getting drunk or doing drugs, but I know that in the long run it is the safest and best thing for me as well as those who care about me. Seeing what the accident did to those that were close to Mariah made me realize that one thing could change tons of peoples' lives drastically, not just mine. Overall I should be thanking Mariah's friends and family for helping me make the right decision and not drink or be around

those who are. The Mariah's Challenge foundation is a remarkable thing and will continue to take kids down the right path, as it did to me.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

October 28, 2007 was a day that will stay in my mind forever. When I heard about the accident, I could not stop thinking about the pain the McCarthy, Kilmer, and Okrusch families were going through. When Mariah's Challenge was issued, I accepted it, and have been very serious about it ever since. Every time I drive by Mariah's cross, it reinforces my decision to stay away from drugs and alcohol.

I truly believe that my choice to accept Mariah's Challenge has guided many of my decisions socially and academically. I have set higher goals for myself, and have devoted much of my time to other, more positive activities. I have worked extremely hard throughout high school to maintain good grades, while also being active and participating through community service.

The main reason I have been able to stay away from these bad behaviors, is having a good group of friends with the same values and morals as my own. While many of my peers in Butte believe there is nothing to do besides drink and party, my friends and I know this is untrue. We find other ways to have fun, without getting into trouble. We have movie nights, go bowling and swimming, and participate in any other activities we can find.

Although Mariah's death was a tragedy, I truly do believe she lives on in all of us. The challenge sent a message which has affected many of us in the community for the better. Without Mariah's Challenge, many of us may not have realized the horrendous consequences that can come with drinking. Accepting the Challenge has helped my life stay positive and healthy, and I am proud to be a part of this campaign.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

 Mariah's Challenge has had a huge impact in my life. Ever since the tragic accident happened in Butte it has made people stop and think twice about drinking and driving. I didn't know Mariah personally but I knew who she was and she seemed like a great girl. I had the opportunity to get to Irish Dance with one of her friends, Val Kilmer for a few years. At our St. Patrick's Day performance we were able to dance in the Mariah's challenge t-shirts, which was a great opportunity. I took Mariah's Challenge when I was in the eight grade, I think it is a great idea. Although many teens think it is cool to drink and party every weekend there are still a select few that don't. I am one of them; I don't drink and don't plan on it. I have huge goals that I want to achieve and don't want to ruin it by drinking as a teen. Through Mariah's Challenge I will be able to achieve my goal of being a dentist. Every since I took the challenge I set my goals high and decided drinking just wasn't for me. I think we need to get more teens in Butte to take the challenge more serious. When I was in the eight grade our English teacher made our classes take the challenge. Although some of us had already taken it I didn't think it was right to force our class to take it. If they aren't going to take it seriously, then why take it? In my opinion Mariah's Challenge is a great thing and I am glad it has had such an impact on my life.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

I made my pledge to Mariah's Challenge in 7th grade. I didn't know years later it would still have an impact on my life.

The first half of my life was spent watching my biological father drink excessively. I was young, but I knew it wasn't right. I remember waiting to see him after work, but not knowing when that would be. After many disappointments I promised myself I would never be like that.

Following my promise, I joined clubs in middle school. I participated in Earth Shuttle, TIP and football. During my summers, I worked hard to become a junior counselor at Camp Watanopa. Now in High School, I am part of Big Brothers/ Big Sisters. I dedicated four years to football and am proud to be part of the 2012 State Championship Team. In my spare time, I hunt and fly fish as much as possible.

In 2012 my siblings and I were adopted by an amazing man I'm proud to call my Dad, Dan Carroll. I first met him when I was in 6th grade. He was on leave for two weeks from Iraq. He has taught us that you absolutely do not need drugs or alcohol to have fun. He also taught us that hard work goes a long way, and to never quit when there's still work to be done.

I choose not to drink or do drugs and Mariah's Challenge has helped strengthen these choices. As I look back, I believe the lessons learned from family, athletics, and volunteering have made me Butte Tough. Tough enough to say no and make the right choice. As I look forward to my future, these values will help me achieve my goals and beyond.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My cousin was a close friend of all three of the girls involved in the accident from which Mariah's Challenge was born. Because of this connection and the horror that resulted in that unspeakable night, I have always been keenly interested in the evolution of this heroic movement. For me, personally, the Challenge has not been easy. Many times, I have been considered an outcast simply because I do not drink or do drugs. The social aspect is very difficult. I am, however, very competitive, and I have never been one to back down from a challenge. Because of this attribute, I can honestly say that standing up for what I believe has given me a tremendous sense of confidence and satisfaction. On the rare occasion that I have been in situations where kids were drinking, I immediately volunteered to be the designated driver, which always seemed to be very much appreciated. Honestly, there are still a lot of underage drinkers out there, but the vast majority of them do not drive while they are intoxicated, and I believe this is a direct result of Mariah's Challenge. In fact, I feel like the Challenge becomes slightly easier late in high school. If you stick with your principles long enough, eventually everyone just recognizes that you are not going to do anything illegal and accepts you for who you are.

I actually have several fiends that have also successfully refrained from drinking. I really don't believe this group of non- drinkers would be so large if Mariah's Challenge had never been implemented. It has had a huge effect on me and everyone in the community. The movement truly is a shining example of something positive being born out of a horrible tragedy.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My first thought for what Mariah's Challenge means to me is that it serves as an important reminder for not engaging in underage drinking and even more so the consequences of driving while under the influence of alcohol. The message seems bigger than that, however. Dedication and repetition is also an underlying message that I hear. The tragedy of Mariah's death has led to a great cause carried out by remarkable people who refuse to let this unnecessary death happen without giving some meaning to it.

Mariah's Challenge started in a small community awareness program and has grown to be known around the world in only a few short years. Unlike so many other accidents involved with drinking and driving, this one will not be forgotten. There is rarely a week that goes by that Mariah's Challenge is not brought to the forefront of people's minds.

Whether it is a billboard, commercial, or flyer, this strong message is ongoing. This has shown me that hard work can get you anywhere you want to go and over any obstacle that stands in your way. Positive repetition is important and these continual efforts are needed. I have high regard and sincere appreciation for the people who are steadfast in this cause to educate and remind us of the devastating consequences that alcohol can and will impose. I realize that every decision I make can affect my life in either a positive or negative way. I am not always the most ambitious person and I realize that I don't always make the right decision. I am not perfect. Nevertheless, I try to be careful and do the right thing when I can. This is how Mariah's Challenge has influenced and changed my life.

Mariah may be gone, but her message carries on and she is not forgotten.

My Name is Mackenzie Callahan and just being able to apply for this scholarship means a lot to me. I'm happy to be able to be with friends and family and tell them the truth about not drinking under age. It means a lot to me and I'm happy that through all of the peer pressure I experiences throughout high school, I still stuck to what meant the most to me. Waiting until you are of age to drink is a very big thing. The laws are out there for a reason, and I believe people should live by them.

I decided being on Mariah's Maroons and also About the Influence would be a good

thing for me. If I could go around and tell people that drinking under age is not something that is cool, I was going to do my best to either change people's thoughts on it, or at least try to make them understand. I wanted to be able to stand out and make sure young people knew before they go to high school that they are their own person. You don't have to go out and drink on the weekends just to have fun. I have always found something my friends and I can do without drinking. I had a friend come up to me at our senior retreat that said "thank you so much for coming into my life" I was so confused because I couldn't think of any reason why I was any different than any of her other friends. She said "I was going down a really hard path and you helped me turn that around. You told me what was important in life and that the friends I had just wanted me there to party with them." It makes me feel good that I can make a different and change someone's life in just a small way.

Thank you for the opportunity to obtain a scholarship from Mariah's Challenge. I believe Mariah's Challenge shares in the same beliefs I do.

“How Mariah’s Challenge changed my life”

Since February 2, 2008 I have taken the pledge given by Mariah’s Challenge to not drink under age, and refrain from illegal drug use. My reason for taking the pledge was so that nobody has to go through the agonizing event the victim’s families were put through. Mariah’s Challenge has become a movement with its implications felt worldwide, in memory of a young girl whose life was taken tragically. That tragic event really shed some light on underage drinking for me, I realized that it isn’t worth the risk because it is morally wrong and tragic consequences can ensue. Also, it taught me that people can change. Mariah’s Challenge has made an immense impact on a community where drinking underage seemed to be a rite of passage, with hard work and great leadership anything is possible.

If Mariah’s Challenge can stand up for what is right, then I believe the cause needs my support. One crucial lesson it taught me was, if you decide to drink underage then you aren’t living a healthy lifestyle. The way the ambassadors of this program have stayed positive throughout tragedy and sadness taught me that something positive can come out of anything, if you keep a good mindset. Ultimately, it taught me I do not have to conform to what my peers are doing. By that I mean, just because many people drink underage that shouldn’t affect the notion that that is an unacceptable practice. I will always keep the ideals of Mariah’s Challenge true to my heart.

HOW MARIAH'S CHALLENGE HAS CHANGED MY LIFE

I still remember the night that the accident happened. We live kind of close by and we heard the sirens. We wondered what had happened. When I came to realize that a young girl was killed by a drunk driver it was very upsetting. I was very thankful that the other two girls were alive, but I was very sad about Mariah. All three girls were classmates of mine and the whole school was in a state of shock. How could this happen to someone so young.

As the years passed and I started getting into driving I would often think back on Mariah's death with much sadness. I wondered, would I want to be responsible for taking a life because I had been drinking and driving? The answer was always no. I would not be able to live with myself.

Although my parents raised me to know right from wrong it was Mariah that inspired me to never drink and drive. Whenever the peer pressure started to get rough I would think of Mariah and I would say absolutely not!

I accepted Mariah's Challenge in 2008 and I have honored her challenge. I will continue to do so and I will try to encourage everyone that I meet to take this challenge.

Thank you for your consideration.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

On the night of the accident I was in Great Falls for a swim meet. My parents were the ones who told me what happened, but not knowing Mariah personally I was not sure how to react. I was in shock wondering how something so terrible could happen to three innocent young girls. I felt terrible for their families and close friends, and I wished that there was some way I could have helped.

Until Mariah's Challenge came along all I could do was pray for the girls and their families in hopes that everything would be okay, but with Mariah's Challenge I realized that I could do more than just pray. I could take action and accept the challenge as well as spread the word to my friends and encourage them to accept the challenge as well.

For me this challenge did not seem difficult mainly because I already made the choice that I was not going to drink in high school. By teaching me to make responsible decisions especially when it comes to alcohol, my parents were and still are my biggest influence behind my decision to not drink underage. I knew that if I did not drink and stayed away from parties where alcohol would be involved that I would make my parents proud.

Although Mariah's Challenge was not my main influence on my decision to not drink underage, I was touched by this tragedy and it gave me another very good reason to not break my promise. To this day I am very proud to say that thanks to my parents and Mariah's Challenge I have yet to drink alcohol or get in a car with anyone who has been drinking. This is my truth and my promise.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

It is no secret that the town of Butte, Montana is renowned for its reputation as "the Mining City." Yet, throughout the century, with our prominent background of Irish heritage, along with our "Butte tough" persona, Butte, Montana has established the name of a notorious drinking community. I was a twelve year old attending seventh grade at East Middle School when the event of Mariah's passing took place. The calamity took our town by surprise. Waves of pain and empathy washed our town clean of social differences, as our home hurt together as one. The accident took with it a young girl who would never grow old and left behind a lesson with the potential to change our town's social norm.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life through several aspects. Firstly, as I witnessed the occurrence through youthful eyes, I was encouraged by the adults around me to not follow in the paths of my town's predecessors. Secondly, throughout my high school years, I was given the motivation to not succumb to the influence of those around me. When I traveled to Germany with the Butte High School German Exchange group, I packed with me a promise I made not only to the McCarthy family, but also to myself. Lastly, Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by providing my actions with a purpose. I do not drink because, at my adolescent age, it is illegal. I also do not drink because I know of the dangers that can result from alcohol. But most of all, I do not drink because I have first-hand lived and second-hand seen the trauma that drinking and driving can cause. Through Mariah's Challenge, I have been educated to make decisions with the hope of a brighter outcome.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

My name is Kaitlyn Bennett and I am a senior at Butte High School. I will graduate in June of 2013. I am appreciative of the opportunity to apply for a scholarship through the Mariah’s Challenge organization. I will be attending the University of Great Falls this coming fall and studying Elementary Education with a focus on the sciences.

Mariah’s Challenge may not have necessarily changed my life, but it certainly influenced me about the risks and consequences of consuming alcohol as I became older.

I had just started my first year of middle school when I heard of Mariah’s accident. My family and older sister Chelsea were very close friends with Mariah and we were all crushed when we heard the news. I made myself a vow that I would never put myself in a position to do anything like this to anyone. Growing up and into high school Mariah’s Challenge has changed my view of alcohol. I found so many other things to occupy my time positively rather than going out and risking my life or someone else’s by drinking. I knew it was important to have the right friends who didn’t pressure me into doing something that I didn’t want to do.

Sports has provided a very positive impact on my life. Not only did we have games on weekends but also practices during the week helped fill the open times. I knew if I was ever caught drinking or cited for an MIP or DUI, all my hard work would have been for nothing. Not only did I want to be a good athlete, I also worked very hard to be a good student. I didn’t want to ever be put in a position where a bad decision could throw everything away.

My family and especially my parents have also been a huge help. They kept me out of situations that might involve alcohol even though I really wanted to be with my friends and have a good time. They work hard to keep me and my younger sister away from all that. They have helped form my life, even when I wasn’t aware that they were helping me, just like Mariah’s Challenge. They were both a positive force in my life that provided the positive guidance and constant reminder that has kept me free from any kind of alcohol or drug use.

When I was just in eighth grade I remember waking up to the news that Mariah had been in an accident and had passed away. It was a very sad couple of months for the Butte community. Even though some of us weren't able to meet her, she had already touched the lives of so many. The moment Mariah's Challenge was announced, I immediately pledged to follow. Pledging has changed my high school career in so many ways. One of the many ways it has changed me is to be a better person, to be the role model I've always wanted to be for Butte youth. Pledging not only to the Challenge, but also to myself has kept me strong to not only stand up and not give in to peer pressure but has kept me away from the dangers that most high school students fall into. So many of the students I attend school with are constantly getting into trouble with the law, and even led to death for some because of the use of alcohol or drugs. I like to think I'm not only here today because I never got into a vehicle with someone under the influence but also because I was strong enough to just say no. To me, alcohol or drugs of any kind was never a way that I had fun. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because I pledged that I would never fall into the statistics, that I would be a role model for teens not only in Butte but maybe even to teens all over the world. This has given me courage to move forward with my life in positive ways. I will continue to follow the challenge as a college student at Montana Tech, hopefully creating a positive influence on other students as well.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

This was such a terrible thing that happened to Mariah. I look back and remember when I found out about it the next day at school. It made my heart stop; I couldn't believe such an innocent girl had been killed by a man driving under the influences, how terrible.

This has really put a change and outlook on my life. No person in this world should be driving under the influence even if you are twenty one. There are so many people in this world that drink and get in their car and drive. No person's life should be taken by a drunk driver. I never want to be that person drinking and driving and never will be. I have such a hard time seeing teenage people drink, evening drinking is terrible it doesn't matter if you're going to drive or not you shouldn't be drinking under the age of twenty one. When I heard about Mariah's challenge I took part in it right away, and signed the sheet we had here at our school. I love that this program has started and hopefully it is changing many people's lives today. There is always that little saying that says "put your keys in the box" meaning you aren't going anywhere that night. You are stuck at home and you aren't driving, doesn't matter if you have had one drink or more no person should be allowed to drive.

No innocent person should be killed by a drunk driver, but you see it happen so much. Why in the world would such a wrong minded person drink and drive and take a life of anyone out there that hasn't done anything wrong. It is so sad; it breaks my heart to even imagine what the family of Mariah went through. This challenge and accident really brought a picture across my family, and made them realize no one should take their life for granite, because you never know what might happen at an unexpected moment. Just like Mariah and her friends dealt with, they never thought that night they were going to be struck by a drunk driver, but it happened. The thing that breaks my heart even more is that drunk man didn't even know he hit teenage girls he thought it was just a deer, it's so sad.

This really has changed my life and the people I care for, mainly my family and my classmates. Every high school teen should take this challenge to stop underage drinking and driving. We have to start somewhere to stop it and its going to start with this challenge that has been created. Teens have to follow this and be smart and realize they can take the life of anyone if they decide to make that bad mistake of drinking and driving underage. As a student at Whitehall high school, I have stepped up and taken this challenge to make our community and state better to stop the underage drinking and driving.

How Mariah's Challenge has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has had a very positive affect on my life over the years. I accepted the challenge when I was younger, but it really had an impact on my life once I got to high school. Unfortunately drugs and alcohol are prevalent in high school and it can be difficult to avoid in certain situations. However I am glad that Mariah's Challenge was put into place as a reminder of the dangers of alcohol consumption. Throughout my time in high school Mariah's Challenge was always a reminder to make the right choices whenever drugs or alcohol were a factor. It is a reminder of how one bad choice that you make can not only put you in danger but you can also be endangering the lives of others. Drinking and driving is a huge issue Mariah's Challenge has always brought awareness to this problem. Also Mariah's Challenge was always a reminder for me to look out for other people and make sure they were safe and not putting themselves or others in danger if they made bad choices. I am glad that this challenge has an impact on my life when it comes to making the right choices. It made me aware of the damage that substance abuse can do to not only my own life, but others as well. This challenge has been a big part of my choice to refrain from drinking alcohol or doing drugs.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I first accepted Mariah's Challenge in fifth grade. I didn't fully understand the whole concept yet, but I did know it was something important. The ideas and emotions I saw made me realize how serious the situation was. Ever since that day, I wanted to aspire to be a role model and refrain from the use of alcohol and drugs. The message was powerful. There are opportunities where I have a choice to make, and I wanted to be a leader for my community.

Accepting the challenge motivated me to become a positive and active member in my community. I joined clubs, participated in athletics, and made friends who shared the same values as me. By staying active, I would not find trouble or hang around a place where I could get into trouble.

I realized there is more to life than partying every weekend and waiting for the weekend. My activities, school, and friends have made me pursue my goals while also learning to have fun. Just by being silly and making the best of a situation is ten times better than being at a party. I have shared laughs, smiles, and even tears with some of the best people on the planet, and I did it all without the use of alcohol and drugs.

Mariah's Challenge has impacted my life in a way I am not sure I fully understand. This challenge has given the community hope and aspirations to change for the better. When I make a choice, it is not only me that is being affected. Everyone is impacted by my decision. So, I made the choice to accept this challenge because I want to be the change and, hopefully, others will see the positive decision and follow me along with other challenge acceptors.

I will always remember Leo McCarthy's presentation about Mariah's challenge. The image of the truck with the imprint of the three girls has haunted me since that day. It scared me in the sense that it could have been my body, but the thing that scared me most was the idea that I could be the one driving. The idea of living with myself for the rest of my life after destroying so many other people's lives makes me feel sick to my stomach. The image of that truck is the reason I took Mariah's challenge. Even though Mariah's challenge has helped keep me on the strait and narrow when it comes to avoiding alcohol and drugs, the challenge inspired me to change a bigger danger in my life and the lives of those around me, my phone and my car.

I love my phone, and I overuse it. But it didn't strike me how big of a problem it could be until I got my licence this year. Anytime that my phone is in my cupholder and makes a sound, I'm tempted to text and drive. I've actually reached for it before, but before I could grab it the image of that truck ran through my mind. I couldn't justify to myself the idea that endangering people just because you want to talk to your friends is any better than endangering people because you want to feel a buzz. Now I keep my phone in my glove department on silent, and I'm a safer driver for myself and the people around me because of it. All thanks to Mariah's challenge.

Committing myself to being alcohol free has incredibly changed my life. I've refrained from drinking and drugs for a few major reasons. These reasons include committing myself to sports, providing safer alternatives for my friends and family, and sticking to the strong morals I've gained throughout life. Remaining drug and alcohol free has made me who I am today.

Drinking alcohol is proven to affect an athlete's abilities to perform, and I've been very dedicated to hockey all throughout high school. I'm trying to take my career as far as possible and possibly get a college scholarship out of it. Therefore I need to always be the best that I can and not lower my level of play with the negative effects that alcohol has on the body.

Another reason I have refrained from drinking throughout high school is so I could always provide a safe ride home for friends and family. As I got older, more of my peers began to go to parties and drink. I've always offered to be the designated driver when they were drinking. Not only does it benefit the people close to me, but it also benefits everyone else.

The final major reason I haven't consumed alcohol is because of the morals I have grown up with. All throughout my childhood I have been taught that drinking wasn't acceptable. I would also like to set a good example for my younger sister and show her that it's possible to have fun in high school without getting drunk every weekend.

These are just a few ways in which the Mariah's Challenge has drastically influenced my life. I have worked hard to get where I am in life and I would not take the chance of throwing that away by drinking or doing drugs.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

 Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life in many different ways. I will never forget in eighth grade, the presentation about Mariah’s challenge. The impact of making bad choices changes the lives of many forever. They wanted to know if we would accept the challenge of not drinking while underage and do not drink and drive. I was unsure at that time what high school would be like. High school started and I realized that being in high school is fun but also a big responsibility. I also saw firsthand what alcohol can do to a person. Classmates have always tried to pressure other kids to drink just to have fun and not be boring. It is a lot harder to say no around your peers. I have always stepped back and thought about what was said at the presentation. My choice was not to drink. You have no control when you drink and bad things can happen in a quick moment. Another major reason why I have not drank alcohol was because of my parents. I have always tried to make them proud. I have always looked up to them. Mariah’s Challenge has helped me make good choices and has changed my life for the better.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's challenge was launched February 2, 2008 after Leo McCarthy's daughter Mariah had been hit by a drunk driver. Since the program was launched I have personally noticed less people drink and drive. Drinking and driving is highly frowned upon as thou not only one person has lost a family member, but many others could too. Mariah's Challenge has been brought to schools and many other places, growing up in Butte I have had Leo come to most all of the schools I have attended since 2008. He explained the situation and how it felt to lose a loved one. Leo would explain how people shouldn't have to deal with huge losses like he had to. HE would explain kindly and get his point across that drinking and driving is not a fun nor a good thing for anyone to do. People should be able to walk in their towns without being scared to be hit by a drunk driver. Since this program was launched I have received many bracelets saying "I accept Mariah's Challenge." Leo McCarthy lost a daughter to a drunk driver and made something great out of it. Mariah's Challenge has limited the number of drunk drivers, and has created stricter laws toward drinking and driving as well. For that, this program has changed my life for the better, I should not ever be worried about a drunk driver hitting any of my family, friends, or even myself. This program has made our community feel more comfortable and mostly safer. Thank you, Leo, for all that you have done.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed my Life

Mariah's Challenge has not only impacted myself but those around me as well. By choosing not to drink and do drugs I made a promise to myself and have been a positive influence for those around me. When I accepted Mariah's Challenge at a young age I felt I was making a difference in my community, even if it's just one individual accepting it can save a life. If we look around butte we can see a lot of bars and spots to buy alcohol that can influence people to make the wrong choice to drink and drive. As I have continued to grow and see some of my fellow peers fall victim to alcohol consumption as a minor it only makes my commitment to the challenge stronger, to stay away from drinking and staying away from people who make the choice to drink when they're under age. Underage alcohol use increases the risk of academic failure, and can take a physical toll on our bodies and this is only amplified when were under the age limit. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways it helps keep me away from the wrong crowds, alcohol, and every time I choose not to drink I know I could be saving a life. I'm constantly an option to my friends and family if anyone has been drinking and needs a ride I will be there. The consequences of driving under the influence are life threatening to everyone around you, every step we take in staying away from drinking and driving has been bettering our community and has been making a major difference in our safety. I feel ever since I accepted Mariah's challenge it has bettered me academically and in sports knowing that I won't drink underage and put others at risk for my actions. I try my best to influence others to make the commitment and help save lives, it changed my life and I hope anyone who accepts Mariah's Challenge continues to better our community day after day.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s challenge has changed my life in many ways. It has shown me the importance of maintaining a healthy and happy lifestyle. When our lifestyles have been disturbed or changed due to the effects of alcohol and drug abuse consequences may occur. These consequences strongly impact an individual’s life in many ways. Our family dynamics is strongly affected by this deadly illness. Other consequences may include; MIP, DUI or possibly serving time in prison. Time in prison could strongly impact an individual’s life in numerous ways. For instance, an individual applying for college scholarships or acceptance into college maybe greatly impacted for these troublesome behaviors. These consequences not only affect our college careers, but also our job careers. Suffering these major consequences could possibly lead to that person not getting a job or not getting a college degree. Mariah’s Challenge has not only changed my life, but many others. There are very few kids in high school that don’t drink or do drugs and I am one of them, not only because of Mariah’s Challenge, but because I choose not to. When I attended East Middle School, I was apart of a group called TASC; which stands for Teens Advocating a Safe Community, I was involved in many activities with TASC like: putting on game nights at the Elementary Schools or even attending meetings about ways we can influence the community by not drinking and driving. I enjoyed being apart of TASC because it taught me a lot of valuable life lessons. I accepted Mariah’s Challenge when I was in 7th grade and I plan to always accept the challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I accepted Mariah's Challenge when it first began in 2008. I was nine years old at the time meaning I was beginning to come of age whether to decide right from wrong and ultimately what my future withheld for me. At the time and being raised in Butte, I didn't understand the severity of drug abuse. Once I was exposed to Mariah's Challenge, it was only the beginning. I began to pay attention to my surroundings and understand what exactly was going on. When people drank or did drugs around me, I began to realize something that traumatized me forever; they weren't themselves. When that moment occurred, I made my final decision that will have affected the rest of my life. I told myself I don't want to drink or do drugs because I will have changed not only my normal, sober self, but also my reputation. One thing I remind kids today is that engaging in any drug activity is indeed illegal and will be on their record and conscience forever. Many high schoolers tend to forget how dangerous they are due to the acceptance from our society. Unfortunately, Butte is known as the party town and with partying generally coincides with drug activity. That's when I ask myself and my peers, "Who do you want to be defined as? What do you want to be known for?" I personally can answer that question very proudly; I am a multiple time all-state and all-conference football player, shrine game linebacker, and will be a college baseball player in a few months. Most importantly, I accomplished all these feats without failing Mariah's Challenge and my life changing decision at nine years old.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Growing up in a time period where you are considered angelic if you don't participate in under aged drinking or drug use may just be one of the saddest remarks I have to live with for my life. Even though I have never been involved in these childish acts, just the fact that our society has evolved into what it is today scares me for what the world will be like when I become an adult. After hearing the inspiring message Leo told our class back in middle school and then again as freshman in high school, I remember placing the flyer to join Mariah's Challenge he handed us on my "important stack of things I must do." When I told my parents that I wanted to join the program, they were ecstatic about my decision and the fact that I would willingly choose to accept such a hard challenge. Since my pledge, I have chosen not to attend parties in which I knew alcohol would be involved, but I evidently knew that in the end, I would become a better person. By not attending parties throughout my high school life, it made it significantly easier to avoid the harsh consequences one receives when choosing to drink underage. I do know that without the substance of alcohol within my body, I am already much better off than those who ignored Mariah's message, since my brain isn't damaged by its lasting effects. I also do know that many students will go to college, and their lives can be changed in an instance with just one, single drink of alcohol. But with the inspiring message Leo has brought to our community, I know that I can continue to be strong and find those who accept my continuous decision.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship Essay

Our community of Butte, unfortunately, has a dependence on a harsh substance, alcohol. Alcohol has embedded itself within our society through multiple generations, to where it is now an acceptable activity for young people to participate in. It is the way our society functions. I have seen the effects drinking has had on people and families. Mariah's Challenge has kept me committed to keeping a promise to obtain the law, not only protecting myself but those around me. Throughout my life, I have witnessed how someone reacts under the influence of alcohol; it changes them, they become something they are not. In the end, it impairs their judgment and more than likely, turns them into something wicked. Mariah's Challenge is built around a specific ethos. It includes life, the reflection of it, and the pursuit of a great one. When someone can deny the "status quo" and accept this challenge it demonstrates a person's respect for their own life. Turning down drugs and alcohol, or a ride with an intoxicated driver, is a recognition of a person's strength to hold the law higher than themselves and it recognizes an appreciation for their community. Denying an addictive substance of any kind, allows someone to live a healthy and mature life; a life where a dependency, or a crutch, is unnecessary. Because of Mariah's Challenge, many are offered an opportunity to reap the benefits of denying alcohol and its' tragic repercussions. I hope to continue to live this way, protecting myself and others that come into my life.

MARIAH'S CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP

Ever since I heard about Mariah's Challenge, I was dedicated to complete the challenge. Looking back now, I am beyond happy that I made the choice to refuse drugs and alcohol throughout my high school career. This decision has impacted my life in many positive ways, and helped me become the person I am today.

Without Mariah's Challenge, I may have made various wrong decisions in high school such as consuming alcoholic beverages, which, as most know, has a high possibility of causing someone to make worse decisions. Mariah's Challenge also allowed me to view drinking in a very different perspective than most high school students. For many, drinking is a way to become more social and "fit in." I however, thanks to Mariah's Challenge, view underage drinking as dumb risk in order to try to have fun or try to fit in. The consequences of getting in trouble for drinking such as an MIP is an excuse enough for me not to drink.

Not drinking in high school has formed me into a better student, athlete, and person in general. I have found interests in activities such as skiing, rollerblading, and watersports and have dedicated much time towards these activities in my free time rather than spending it drinking. I have also been able to perform well in the sports I play since my work and effort has not been soiled by the effects of drinking. This is another reason how Mariah's Challenge has positively impacted my life.

In conclusion, accepting Mariah's Challenge has changed my life tremendously and shaped me into the person I am today. It has taught me that I can have much more fun doing activities I like than I would have drinking or participating in other illegal activities.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

As long as I can remember, Mariah's Challenge has been a part of this community. And with, that being said, Mariah's Challenge has always been part of my life. I recall when it happened and remember that one of the girls involved lived just a street away from me. At the time it happened, I was only 7 years and didn't realize what impact Mariah's death would have on my life.

I was just in elementary school at Hillcrest, I remember being told at an assembly at school that our janitor lived very close to where it happened. He went and helped Mariah and the other girls involved. After that there was such an emphasis on not drinking and driving. I can't count the times that it was talked about at school, it was in the news, and I even traveled to Illinois; those kids had heard of the program and what happened to Mariah. When I was able, I accepted Mariah's Challenge, to not be a part of underage drinking. As entered middle school I continued to be involved sports, weight lifting, and community service. I have made the choice in my life to not be involved with people who are underage drinking or a part of other unhealthy choices. Even though this has led to me losing some "friends" in my life, I know this is the right choice for me. To this day I still wear my Mariah's Challenge bracelet!

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Teenagers growing up in Butte, Montana know there are not many teenage related activities or functions to keep us busy. As one travels uptown, there are numerous bars also. Not only does this give teens a choice, it contributes to the idea to drink, as "everyone else is." Many high school students choose to drink and then drive also. Once a person has consumed alcohol, they risk not only their own lives but someone else's. I have chosen not to consume alcohol while under age and I will represent Mariah's Challenge as well as an advocate.

I have made a choice to never get in a vehicle with someone who has been drinking or using illegal drugs. All it takes is one time and my life could be changed forever. When a tragedy like this occurs the family never fully recovers from the situation. If any of my friends decide to drink, I offer to give them rides because I don't want them to risk driving home.

To keep teens out of trouble in Butte, Montana I participate in Teens Advocating a Safe Community which I am vice president of. Our main goal is to inform teens of the consequences of drugs and alcohol and make the world a better place. For example, we put on an alternative party on St. Patrick's Day for the middle school and high school students. This gives teens a safe place to be instead of out on the streets with drunk drivers.

I accept Mariah's Challenge because I understand that the consequences of one's poor decisions can cause someone else to lose their life. I never want to have to go through my life without my friends and family by my side due to the use of alcohol or drugs. This challenge has given me confidence to refuse to drink or use drugs and proudly say I accept Mariah's challenge.

Thank you for your consideration of me for the Mariah's Challenge Scholarship.

When I was a young girl my grandfather always used to tell me that my choices define who I become. To this day I always think about that saying when it comes time to make a choice. I think to myself how this will affect me in the long run, and I guess that is where this scholarship comes into play. All my life I have always tried to make the best choices possible, and I will continue to do that.

I began my working career when I was just fourteen years old. I became responsible shortly after that for a car payment. My parents did not force either of these on me. I choose them for myself. I wanted to show them and myself that I have the responsibility to something other than just my school work. I wanted to prove that I am capable of being able to have and handle my own money. This is just the beginning of what made me the person I am today.

I am currently seventeen and I have never had an alcoholic drink or used any type of drug. Nor have I ever put myself in a situation where I would be pressured to do so. In my opinion, I don't need alcohol to have a good time with my friends. Better yet I don't need alcohol or drugs in my life period. All I need in my life is my family and friends who support me with everything that I do.

This scholarship has changed me because it has showed me the value of hard work. It has showed me to stay abstinent from drugs and alcohol. It has showed me to always strive for my goals and to have a clear mind. This scholarship has given me the motivation to be the person I am today.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I grew up living in a household with an alcoholic. This not only changed how I grew up, but also led me to make a promise.

When I was around seven years old my parents divorced, my mom moved out, and she remarried. Before my parents divorced I was never exposed to alcoholics. After my mom got remarried, to an alcoholic, I started to be around adults who would drink regularly and partied. I was never comfortable going to those parties. I would be there late in the night surrounded by drunken adults who were loud and sometimes scary. That was the beginning of growing up with an alcoholic.

The drinking did not just happen at the parties, it would continue in the house during all hours of the day, almost every day. This caused issues, like my stepdad throwing parties, keeping me up late on school nights. His drinking also caused him to turn aggressive towards my mom, brothers, and I. After years of his drinking he eventually ended up in the hospital with a damaged gastrointestinal tract. He had to undergo multiple surgeries, but made it through. However, he didn't leave unscathed, he now has celiac disease. But to my surprise he did not stop drinking. I never understood why he would continue drinking, even after it almost killed him. But I soon realized it was because as an alcoholic he had to have a drink, it was an addiction.

It made me realize just how toxic alcohol and other addictive substances were. It made me promise myself that I would never let myself become like my stepdad. Mariah's challenge gives me a way to document my promise that I made to myself, which is to stay clean, educate myself and others, and be responsible as I grow older.

“ How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I was only 8 years old when the tragedy on October 8, 2007 happened, but it has changed my life in many positive ways. From that time on we have had many speakers come to our schools and talk to us about the dangers of not only drinking but also drinking and driving. It was the first time anyone other than my parents talked and educated me about the dangers of drinking and driving. It reinforced what my parents have always taught me about the dangers of drinking and the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol. With what I have learned from Mariah's Challenge and my parents talking to me about alcohol, I have chosen not to drink alcohol and have not drunk any alcohol throughout my high school career. I am more cognizant of being around people drinking making bad choices. There have been a several times I have turned down driving with my friends because they drank and I realize there is nothing good that comes from it. My parents also reinforce what Mariah's Challenge teaches. My parents do not drink because their father's were both alcoholics and listening to what they went through as children and the impact it has left on them has also changed my life. Mariah's Challenge has educated me and with the knowledge I now have, I can make good choices and that you do not have to drink to have fun, if you have a positive influence of friends and family you can do anything you want without the use of drugs and/or alcohol. What I am trying to say is that it has given me confidence that and the wisdom to make good choices and refuse alcohol without fear of being ostracized. Thank you Mariah's Challenge, I believe you have saved many lives throughout the nation, keep doing what you do.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has influenced my life tremendously. The way that I have lived my life thus far has been impacted mostly through Mariah's challenge. I first heard Leo McCarthy speak in the Hillcrest auditorium. After that I heard him speak at my eighth grade year T.I.P. (Teens in Partnership) which brought an entire audience to tears, and you would have been able to hear a pin drop. That talk was definitely the point in my life that has influenced me the most. I decided to dedicate myself to prevention, so I joined TASC, T.I.P., Butte Cares, and many more. I have continued doing T.I.P. throughout my high school career and I am so glad that I did. I now get to help others make the same choice that I did. People, even adults, have tried to peer pressure me several times to try drinking, and I am proud to say that I have never given in. Every time that someone would ask me the first thing that came to my mind was Mariah's Challenge. I feel a great sense of pride in myself for sticking to my values and continuing my pledge to Mariah's Challenge. It definitely is not a way to be popular in school, but sticking to this challenge was more important to me than popularity. I would like to thank Mariah's Challenge for being such an influential part of my life.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has had a significant impact on my life. Mariah's story is a tragic story. Every time I hear the story it has a greater impression on me. Her story has taught me the dangers of underage drinking. I choose not to take part in underage drinking in our community. I learned this at a young age from Mariah's story. There are many risks that come with the choice to underage drink, such as drinking under the influence and MIPs. These actions put everyone else's lives in danger. There are so many consequences that can come with drinking or the use of drugs under the age limit. As someone with health issues, I know drinking would affect every aspect of my life in a negative way. Many teenagers in our community believe you need to take part in drinking to have fun or be popular. I believe you just need to be yourself. Choosing to exclude myself from these activities has been a blessing. I have an amazing group of friends that have decided not to take part in these underage activities as well. The first time I heard Mariah's story was in 8th grade during TIP. Ever since then, I have decided to participate and help out with TIP as a high school mentor every year. I have learned to live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy my life without alcohol or drugs. I accept Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

As a young girl sitting in the gym at Emerson Elementary, I remember Leo McCarthy talking about Mariah, her story, and how he planned to change the young kids of Butte regarding underage drinking. Ever since that day, his words, "no stinking thinking and no stinking drinking," have made an enormous impact in my brain. Growing up in Butte, giving into the stigma of underage drinking was something that I used to think was inevitable. Once I reached high school, I realized that underage drinking was more of a problem than I had ever imagined. I wanted to be the small percentage of kids in high school that made it out of high school having never drank or participated in illegal activities. Not only did I have no desire to drink, but I wanted to be the designated driver, or be the one to take care of my friends and help them to make the right decisions. Mariah's story and challenge has helped to make this a reality. Another way that Mariah's Challenge has changed my life is for its overall message. We don't realize it, but substantial changes that happen in lives occur after something tragic happens. Mariah's Challenge how taught me that it shouldn't take something terrible for someone to change the next person in line's life. Last year I was put into a medically induced coma and fought for my life for over a month. My experience taught me to take life by storm and truly live every day like it was your last. I have taken a positive route and began speaking to groups about my experience and show people that there truly is a light at the end of the tunnel. I admire Leo and the McCarthy family for taking their life changing event and turning it into something positive. Thank you so much for showing me that there is more to life than drinking and drugs, and that just because I am a teenager doesn't mean that I must give into the peer pressure to be like everyone around me.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Being born and raised in Butte, Montana, I have noticed several undeniable characteristics about our small town. While Butte is filled with history and an immense amount of support for the people that call it home, a certain tradition of underage drinking seems to remain.

As I drive by Mariah's memorial on Blacktail Lane every day, it is a constant reminder of a careless act that could have been prevented, and how important it is to be responsible not only when your own life is in danger, but also when others' lives are stake. I was seven years old when this tragedy happened. Since then, I have grown up with the values set by loved ones. From my parents and sister, to my grandparents and other adult role models in the Butte community it has been a priority of mine to refrain from drinking until the age of twenty-one.

Throughout high-school, I have been very fortunate to have interests and commitments that have made the temptations of drinking and going to parties non-relevant. Underage drinking remains an issue with every class and every sport team in any high-school. I find it disheartening to have teammates that make the personal decision to go to parties and participate in under-age drinking. Drinking has never been worth it for me because I work very hard whether it is off or on the court, field, or track to be successful. Knowing the damage, it has on the underdeveloped body and the penalties one can receive, it is unbelievable that the culture has not changed.

I believe the only way we can hope for change is to stand up for the right thing. Mariah's Challenge has always been a reminder for me and other students to stand up and make responsible decisions.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

I vaguely remember the day after Mariah was killed, I don't remember the event itself as much as how it affected my parents as well as other community members. At the time my brother was just a few years younger than her, and my parents were processing all of the "what if's". Going to school the next day I saw that many of my teachers had tear stained faces, and often were seen leaving the room to take a short break to compose themselves. Seeing the reactions of those around me had a great impact on me. The incident had so greatly affected my parents, and they didn't even know her. With this thought in mind, I often find myself thinking about how they would react if something similar ever happened to me. These thoughts push me to stay true to the challenge, and to push those whom I care about to stay true as well. Not only does this challenge have the ability to keep me safe, it had the power to keep those around me safe as well. If everyone were to accept this challenge the world would be a better place, and most importantly a safer place.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Alcohol has always been a part of my life. Most of my family surrounds themselves with alcohol and some are even addicted to it. I have had friends that have begun drinking or smoking that are unable to stop. Though I myself have not been involved with drugs or alcohol, for the longest time I thought that there would be a point in which I could spiral down into that hole of addiction. I just thought that if the people around me become addicted, then maybe I would to.

When my uncle nearly killed himself last year due to being drunk at the time, I knew it was time to take initiative and stop myself before I started because otherwise someday, I could become an addict too. I always knew what Mariah’s Challenge was and what the Organization did, but I was never actively involved with the program. I was taught about it through out elementary and middle school so there was never a question on what the message was. It was just simpler back then when none of my friends were drinking or smoking and we could just be kids. But now a days, most of the friends I had have begun to drink on most weekends. I don’t look down upon them or what they do, I just wish they could make better decisions.

I was too young to fully grasp the death of Mariah due to me being around seven years old at the time. Death was never something that I had a full grasp on when I was that age. Granted I luckily not had any alcohol or drug related deaths in my family, but I have seen how it can affect the person and the people around them. This is where I would say the idea of Mariah’s Challenge has affected me most. I have always subconsciously followed the message. I just want the people around me that I care about most to never have something happen to them due to drugs or alcohol.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The first time I heard Leo McCarthy talk about the death of Mariah Daye was in eighth grade at the TIP Lock-In. His talk changed my life and there is no doubt that it was for the better. It was in this moment that I promised myself and promised Mariah that I would not be near or drink alcohol while underage. Although it seemed like 'no big deal' at the time, throughout my four years at Butte High School it has been quite difficult. The town of Butte is small, and kids tend to think that one of the only ways they are able to have fun is using alcohol and/or drugs. They also see it as a way to 'fit in' with the crowd. Refraining from drinking has guided who I hang out and that has been the most difficult part. Because Butte High School is a relatively small high school, it was hard to find my place in the beginning. Putting the filter on students who do not participate in drinking and drugs slimmed down the choices even further. I found myself staying in on Friday nights with my family, which is not a bad thing, while the ones I wanted to hang out with were out partying. Yes, it has been tough, but I have found my place at the high school and a best friend that I am always able to count on.

Although it has been hard, accepting Mariah's Challenge has had the best, positive impact on my life. Not only has this drastically influenced my life, it has also impacted who I am as a person and the characteristics I carry. The strong morals that I grew up with shine through when making the decision to not drink in high school. To help combat the number of underage teens drinking, I have joined TASC and TIP. Joining these organizations has helped me do my part when trying to promote healthy lifestyles. As a member of the Butte community I want to do what it takes to improve the lifestyle of our generation. I want to be able to empower those

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Growing up I remember Leo McCarthy always coming to school to talk about Mariah's Challenge and I never really understood the significance until high school. Starting high school, I had some friends that would often drink because their parents would let them or because they saw it and thought it was cool. In reality, it wasn't cool, it was just simply dangerous. Looking back on the past four years and how bad those people have become, I am glad I am no longer a part of that friend group. Every weekend, watching them go out drinking, not caring for their safety or anyone else's safety is very concerning. I will admit I struggled for a while not being in a solid friend group, but when I was reminded of Mariah's Challenge, I was reminded that having few friends is better than being in a group that puts their lives and others lives in danger. As the years have went by and we've got our licenses, it just increases that risk of something bad happening especially for those who do drink. Mariah's Challenge put into perspective how I have been lucky to remove myself from that group and to not be partying every weekend. I am thankful now that I have a good group of friends and I have Mariah's Challenge to remind me of the growth I've made throughout high school.

RE: Mariah's Challenge Application Essay

My Name is Kaven Noctor. I am a senior at Butte High School. I would like to share with you how the Mariah's challenge has changed my life for the better. I was very young boy when Mariah passed due to a drunk driver, but the tragedy affected me because she was a very good friend to my cousin, and they were together with other friends as well the night she was hit. My Grandma Willy explained to me what had happened and why it is the law and the right choice for people to never drink and drive. My Grandmother talked to me at a young age that although adults sometimes have a few drinks that it can be a bad choice for many and lead to bad choices. In years to come I saw other adults and youth I know have problems due to drinking choices, so I decided to abstain from alcohol myself until I am 21 and maybe never, I took the Mariah's Challenge.

I am very proud to have taken the Mariah's Challenge. It has been difficult at times. In high school drinking is a big part of the culture and I have had great friends that I have been close with who I have grown apart from because they have chosen to drink often, and I continue to abstain. There have been many Friday and Saturday nights I choose to stay at home because friends are going to parties and drinking, some have said I am missing out of the fun of youth. However, in those times some may say I "miss out" on fun I have then focused my time on healthier activities like working out, basketball and golf. I am very excited to have an opportunity to golf in college and have had some great experience playing basketball. I am probably in better health then I would be if I drank. Last, I have lived a life I can be proud of and made my Grandma very proud of me. That alone is worth any sacrifice I have made.

In addition to my athletic and educational goals I am also a role model which motivates me to continue the challenge. If I can live a healthier life and complete goals, I make then maybe my younger siblings or their friends watching me will also be inspired to do the same. I have 3 younger siblings and younger cousins in my life, and I hope that as they get older, they will see that staying away from alcohol and never drinking and driving is the right choice. It is important for me to be an example to youth and make my family proud.

I will take this challenge with me and the lessons I have learned about life and true happiness will be with me wherever I go. Keeping to my commitment to this challenge will be more important then ever in my college years to come. I will need to be totally focused to be a great golfer for MT Tech and maintain the goal of having over a 3.5 GPA. I know that I can do it because I have seen the good that has come out of being responsible and abstaining from drinking. I am also very proud to be part of something good that has come out of a tragedy. Thank you for the opportunity to apply for this scholarship but most importantly thank you for a program that helps me guide my life in a positive direction.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge is a movement that has been an influential part of my life and community almost my entire life. At a very young age, I was taught that abstaining from drugs and alcohol is a vital aspect of living a happy, healthy, and successful life. However, I did not initially realize the significance of taking the pledge. As I got older, I began to realize just how a tragedy, such as Mariah's passing, can truly have an impact on a community. Taking part in Mariah's Challenge has allowed me to see that there is something much more important than making poor decisions in order to fit in with my peers: staying true to myself and what I know to be best for me.

In middle school, I was one of many who refused to drink or do drugs. However, as time went on, I noticed that more and more of my friends began to make bad decisions. Instead of caving into the peer pressure, I decided to throw myself into things I am passionate about that better me as a person and provide a brighter future. When I got to high school, I joined student council, HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America), Montana History Club, and played varsity volleyball. I also have maintained a 4.0 GPA while taking all honors classes. Instead of partying on the weekends along with my peers, I kept Mariah's Challenge in mind and spent time with my family instead. Mariah's Challenge taught me the gravity of considering my safety and future when making decisions. This became even more important to me when I learned that there have been struggles with alcohol abuse that have occurred throughout my family's history.

Throughout the past four years at Butte High School, I have lost friends that did not support the decisions I made that I knew to be good for me. At times I was teased for being a "goody-two-shoes" for resisting peer pressure, but I relentlessly stayed true to who I am and

what I value in life. Eventually, I found myself a good group of friends and surrounded myself with people who believe in Mariah's Challenge as much as I do. I learned that I had the ability to enjoy the entirety of my high school experience without the help of alcohol, drugs, or other harmful substances. I also learned that drinking alcohol and driving a vehicle is not a decision that only impacts my safety, but also the safety and lives of those around me. I am proud of every decision regarding my health, safety, and future that I made in high school.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has had a very positive effect in my life. It has taught me the many dangers of drinking alcohol or doing drugs irresponsibly. It taught me about all the hardships and pain the addiction of those two can lead to. Addiction to alcohol only leads to pain.

I have learned because of Mariah's Challenge that I do not want to cause pain to my loved ones by doing something I very easily could have prevented. It is selfish and flat out dumb to get behind the wheel intoxicated. That is why I always call my parents whenever they go out. I am willing to drive them or anyone I know home if they are intoxicated. There are too many people that think they can do it and all it causes is trouble. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because now I think more about the dangers of alcohol, and how I can provide safety for those who I simply reach out to.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

As an individual who grew up in Butte, Montana, it didn't take long to hear of the catastrophe that happened on that October night in 2007. The days that followed that dreary night my parents sat me down and explained what happened. I was only six years old, but I knew that what happened that night would affect me and my decisions for the rest of my life. After listening to Mr. McCarthy at my sixth-grade graduation, I took the pledge of accepting Mariah's challenge. Now, after almost nineteen year of refraining from using any drug or consuming alcohol, I can proudly say that this pledge has developed me more than I could have ever imagined.

While there are numerous enlightening factors that have come from this commitment, the most influential impact has been that of discipline. The discipline it takes to say no to a friend or fellow student who peer pressures you into participating in the consumption of these substances. The discipline it takes to walk away from someone who has been your friend since kindergarten because of contrasting beliefs and morals. The discipline it takes to go down the path that is less taken today.

Not only have I developed discipline in staying true to my pledge, but I have also integrated it into all aspects of my life. I have applied this discipline into my academic studies, extracurricular activities, family relationships, and everyday lifestyle. A normal daily schedule consists of a morning weights session that is then followed by a full 7 period school day that include multiple college and AP courses. Following these eight hours of school, I have an hour to lift, stretch, and speed work. From here, I get food and do my homework before I have practice until nine at night. This schedule is not always easy, but necessary in order to meet individual goals. Without the discipline that was established and built by adhering to the Mariah's pledge, I

never would have had the discipline it takes to follow this schedule. Because of this discipline, I have been able to accomplish some of my biggest aspirations in athletics and academics. I have been able to be part of rebuilding some athletic programs at Butte High on my way to earning prestigious awards like the Montana Gatorade Player of the Year.

I realize this rigorous schedule for sports can only last for so long, but I am confident that the discipline I have learned from refraining from partaking in drug or alcohol use will transfer into my adult life. I know I will be able to use the same energy and diligence in my future career, as a husband, and a father. I know I will be able to make the right decision and direct others to do the same. The catastrophe that happened 13 years ago will forever be my inspiration.

Ever since I was young, my parents reminded both my sister and me that we needed to make responsible decisions in our lives. One of the main things they stressed was to abide by laws and rules. The one thing they would constantly talk about was not to drink or do drugs. My parents have both witnessed too many people's lives being destroyed due to alcohol abuse.

When I talked to my mom about Mariah's Challenge Scholarship, she talked about the morning she received a phone call from a neighbor telling her about Mariah's death. Even though my mom did not know Mariah personally, she was very upset with the news. My grandfather always spoke so highly of the McCarthy family and their loss was our family's loss too.

At times, when my parents read the newspaper, it can be very morbid. They have no problem telling me about instances where alcohol has cost someone else their life or disrupted another family. My family has been very open about these issues. They never shy away from talking about things that can affect my future.

Because my family is so open about certain issues, I have always stayed away from alcohol. I do not hang around kids that drink or go to events where kids are drinking. At times, it seemed like my circle of friends has decreased in size due to this decision, but I'm ok with that. I can go out on a Friday night and have a great time doing something that does not involve alcohol. I know that I will not put anyone's life in danger when I drive home because I am sober. I will not wake up sick the next morning because I drank too much. I feel that I have had a wonderful life so far without the presence of alcohol in my life, and I really have my parents to thank for that. Unfortunately, it took a tragedy in our community for this issue to be brought to the forefront, but I have taken actions to help educate others about the importance of abstaining from alcohol and drugs through the groups I am involved with. Because of Mariah's Challenge, I have done everything possible to spread her message.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has always been a large part of my life in Butte, Montana. Starting in elementary school, school officials would talk about saying no to drugs and alcohol no matter the peer pressure. Because of that idea being stuck in my head at a young age, I believe that saying no was the way to go. Growing up in Butte, I have seen many incidents involving alcohol that I wish I hadn't seen. My friends, family, and even strangers I have witnessed go down the wrong path while under the influence of alcohol has opened my eyes on how I want my life to be and who I want to become.

My family struggles with alcoholism and drug use. I have seen my uncles and aunts destroy themselves from the use of alcohol and what path it has taken them down. I wish I could go back and tell some of my relatives that have passed away, what it meant to me if they would have put down the bottle, not gotten arrested, or not have gotten a DUI. My relatives that have successfully taken alcohol out of their lives, tell me stories of their past. When they are telling their stories I sit in wonder of why they chose the path they did. They have taught me not to choose that path, but yet focus on a better future for myself.

My friends I have met showed me what opportunities I would miss out on if I chose to drink. They have showed me that if I choose to drink at such a young age, I would miss out on waking up early and enjoying my day without being sick, sports I enjoy, and even the simplest of things such as being able to have fun without alcohol. Finding kids in Butte that want to hang out and enjoy the night or day sober, is a hard task. It shouldn't be so hard.

My family, friends, and even strangers have shown me that alcohol doesn't affect just one person, but a whole community. When under the influence, people are not in control of themselves and can put everyone in danger when getting behind the wheel of a motorized vehicle. Their problems, suddenly turn into everyone else's as well with one wrong action. I have personally seen someone get arrested for a DUI and I will never forget how I felt about the situation. I will never be able to erase the picture of the police officer putting handcuffs on a drunk driver.

Mariah's Challenge has opened my eyes to the awful world of alcohol and what demons it can bring a person using it. I chose to take the Mariah's Challenge pledge for myself and for my future. I want to be able to go to college, get a degree, hold a steady job, have a family, and so much more. With alcohol, not all of my goals can be achieved.

When I sat down in front of a computer with my babysitter, Jenna McCarthy, I did not fully understand what accepting Mariah's Challenge really meant. I knew that my neighbor, who had babysat me with her sister or who I often saw practicing volleyball or hanging out with friends, died in a tragedy. As I have grown up, I have learned what Mariah's Challenge is truly about, and I never could have imagined how it would affect my life. Because of Mariah's Challenge, I have gone through high school without using illegal substances. This challenge seems like a simple task; however, when alcohol and drugs are so prominent in young people, it is hard to avoid. I accepted Mariah's Challenge because I know my choices will have a lifelong impact on myself and other community members.

Using alcohol and drugs in high school can affect a person in the present and the future. I have chosen to abstain from using illegal substances because I know my choices today can play a role in the rest of my life. Throughout high school, many of my peers have asked me why I do not drink, and the answer is simple: one night of drinking is not worth the effects it can have on my future. Mariah's Challenge has served as the backbone of my social life in high school because it has pushed me to avoid making the wrong choices.

Teenagers tend to act as sheep. My grandpa always told me to be a lion not a sheep; I have been a lion by not giving into peer pressure and avoiding drugs and alcohol. I know that people, mostly younger kids, are watching me and even looking up to me. I know that being a positive example can transform the community of Butte, which is why I was a part of the Butte Cares Youth Leadership Team and just joined the Butte Cares Youth Coalition. Taking steps to encourage other community members to abstain from illegal substances will help others and enrich the community I call home. By taking lead among my peers, I have been able to recognize

the importance of my healthy lifestyle choices and encourage others to make healthy and safe choices too.

I believe that I deserve the Mariah's Challenge scholarship because I have made positive choices and served as a good example for others. If I do not receive this scholarship, I still know that the choices I have made because of Mariah's Challenge have paved the way for a positive and healthy future. I hope to continue Mariah's legacy by leaving a promising impact for myself and the future youth of Butte.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

With every choice I make, I'm growing as an individual. Growing up means making mistakes and gaining new knowledge with those experiences. Everything has a reason and it's okay not to know what those reasons are. I serve a purpose, even if I'm not aware of what it is, and everything is as it should be.

Last year it would have been impossible to even try and convince me of this way of thinking. My mind was and still is set on the fact that I might never be good enough for anything. I believed that I was useless, and the entire world would do better without me. I lived in a dark, empty, and lonely place filled with swirling negative thoughts. Today, I'm taking two steps forward instead of one step back. I'm in the process of healing.

At the tender age of eighteen, I'm learning many things that seventeen-year-old me couldn't even begin to fathom. I may be lost right now, but I realize that I'm not alone in my journey. I oversee myself and I can either try to face life with an optimistic view or I can continue to view the world as I have been dark. I'm aware of the road ahead of me will be filled with challenges, new opportunities, and overwhelming changes. Yet, I am determined to push through to be my best self. I want to strive to reach my fullest potential possible.

Once upon a time the thought of college was a farfetched dream because I never thought I would live long enough to even have it become a possibility for me. Because I love kids, I always knew they would become involved in my everyday life. I remember playing "school" as a child and "teaching" students. I might have been just pretending at the time, but all the experiences I've personally had with teachers throughout my school life have molded the way I view life. They give more than they could ever know. I'm eternally grateful for the teachers I've had and the impacts they have left on me. The knowledge I've gained, I can take with me throughout my entire life.

Because I live with bipolar disorder everything I say, do, is never ending. I act purely on the way I feel and most of the time I myself am not aware of how I'm acting, which causes more problems than one might think is possible. I'm high functioning with my mental illness, but people aren't aware of how difficult it is. Second guessing all the choices, I made and make creates a whiplash and leaves a stinging feeling within myself. I lack the control of being rational and reasonable during situations beyond my control. I do know that I am more understanding of things that people my age can't understand.

I want people to know that people are not their disorder. They have their own thoughts and feelings, just like me. I am not my disorder. I define myself. My mental illness does not. I see now that I am constantly changing and that this is a good thing. I'm sprouting into the person I'm meant to be. It may not be today, tomorrow, or even next month, but self-discovery takes years. I'm simply taking the first step.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When I think of Mariah's Challenge, the first words that come to mind are dedication and integrity. It takes true dedication to be fully committed to the challenge and what it stands for. I think back to when I was first introduced to Mariah's Challenge in my elementary years, when I was sitting in the Hillcrest gym, waiting for the assembly to start. I thought we were just having another guest speaker, but what I didn't know was that this guest speaker would change my life forever. When I learned of how a young girl's life was taken away because of someone else's terrible decision to drink and drive, I couldn't wrap my head around how a person could be so careless. I was angry and wanted to be able to do something about it, so when we were introduced to the challenge, I gladly accepted. Since that day, I have been able to have a roadmap on how to shape my life. Because of this challenge, I have gained the valuable life skills of dedication and integrity.

Dedication is a word I have heard many times in my life. Coaches remind their players that they must be dedicated to making themselves better athletes through effort and hard work. In school, teachers remind their students that in order to succeed, they must be dedicated to their studies. To me, dedication not only applies to things we do, but also to who we are as people. Dedication means never giving up, even when things get hard. If we are not dedicated to what we stand for and believe in, we are lying to ourselves. Many times, this dedication is forgotten in life. From this challenge, I have learned to dedicate myself fully to everything I do, no matter how small.

Another key lesson accepting Mariah's Challenge has gifted me is how to show true integrity. There are many times in life when I know I could take an easier path, but I choose not to because I would only be hurting myself. When doing workouts from home, it would be very

easy to lie about reps, but I would only be cheating myself. I know that the workout might be hard now, but it will only make me that much stronger in the future. I use this same integrity to stay true to my values. I maintain my integrity in every part of my life because of this challenge.

Dedication and Integrity are just a small part of how Mariah's Challenge has benefitted my life. I have become a person I am proud of. This challenge has helped me succeed in school and athletics. Because of this success, I have achieved my dream of being a part of a collegiate volleyball team. I have become a person I am proud of. When I look back on my high school years, I will smile because I have achieved great things, thanks to Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Mariah's challenge has helped me reach my goals I have been chasing my entire life. Staying drug free helped me compete at my best in football and earn a chance to play football at Montana Tech. I have learned that drugs will lead to issues that make it hard to perform at the highest level I can. It has allowed me to focus on school without any distractions on something that could affect my mental abilities. I am very happy that I decided to stay away from drugs and alcohol and very happy with the way life has been since I decided to make that decision.

I have been blessed with the family I have that it made my decision easy. My uncle has been struggling with alcohol for a little while and that's why I decided to stay away from drugs of any kind. He was in a near fatal car accident that ended being one of the scariest days of my life. I made the decision on that day that I would never drink or do drugs in my life because I don't want to hurt my family the way he did that day. I find it not worth jeopardizing my future so I could go drink on the weekends with all the other kids I know.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

I took Mariah's challenge to stay abstinent from alcohol and drugs earlier this school year, but I have been substance free my whole life. Drinking is a lifestyle that everyone is free to choose, but it is a decision that carries a lot of negative consequences with it. I believe that alcohol consumption takes away one's freedom and agency, destroys valued relationships, and leads many to an unpromising future full of hardships and regret.

Throughout my life, I have encountered many intoxicated people. It's one of the many hazards of my job as a waitress. I get to see firsthand how people become disoriented and lose control over their emotions after drinking. When people order multiple rounds of alcoholic drinks, they become aggressive or cause fights with their server and surrounding guests. What worries me even more is how they get home. I pass by Mariah's memorial on Blacktail Lane every morning. I often imagine what it would be like if I had a loved one taken from me like that, or I taken from my parents. It saddens me to think that people would make the decision to get behind the wheel. Most of the time, it's not their intention, however. Taking part in excessive drinking is what clouded their judgment, but it's a problem that could have been stopped at the start.

Not only does substance abuse cripple the person, it destroys important relationships as well. Many families struggle to bond and communicate, and alcoholic consumption makes the process of strengthening a family even harder. It can make a loved one hostile and isolated. The more one relies on a substance, the harder they are to reach and connect with. I had a very close friend growing up who came from a broken and struggling family. One year for her birthday I was allowed to attend a small party and spend the night. Unfortunately, her step-father drank continually throughout the celebration. He started fighting with my friend's mother and pulled a knife out on us. He was arrested that same night, and soon after my friend stopped seeing me. I was sad to lose someone so important in my life at the time, but that was a life that I was glad to leave behind.

People try to sway my opinion of the substance by claiming it's a lot of fun to try. My peers do a very good job at times to make it look exciting, but I have experienced too much of the effects to desire the high. Because I have remained clean, I have received greater opportunities, both in school and out. I produce a better job performance, get to participate in sports and fill out scholarships such as this one, and people think higher of me. I am proud of the choice that I have made, and I wish that more people will make it. And every day when I drive down Blacktail Lane, I am reminded why I live the way I do.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life for the better. The day I knew I wanted to accept the challenge was the day that my siblings Josh and Kayla Ericson accepted the challenge. Leo McCarthy made my decision to take Mariah's Challenge very easy. Hearing his speeches at T.I.P. (Teens in Partnership) and seeing the effect this has had on the community throughout the years made me want to encourage others to take the challenge. It is not an easy challenge due to the peer pressure and fitting in, but I knew I didn't need to drink or do drugs to fit in. This challenge has always been something that I have taken very seriously and will continue to take seriously. Being a member of Big Brothers Big Sisters, T.I.P., Butte High Volleyball, Basketball and Softball programs make me want to be a good leader and role model for the younger children. Being a good leader and role model to me means I have to lead by example and do the right things even when no one is watching. I hope that others will continue to take this challenge seriously, due to the amount of time and effort Leo McCarthy and his family have put into this amazing challenge. When I graduate high school, it will feel so good to know that I have done the right thing, guide myself to make the right choices and be independent!

Thank you for your time and consideration,

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When I was younger, I accepted Mariah's Challenge in which I pledged to refrain from drinking or using illegal drugs. Since that time, I have gone through my educational years in the Butte community and stayed committed to the promise that I made to myself and the Mariah's Challenge organization. I made a stand for what I believed to be important to me, my life, and my future, and in doing so I learned many lessons along the way.

Growing up, it was taught to me that everyone is free to make their own choices each day. However, we are not free from the consequences of our choices. There are always affects that result from your actions, and if you do not prepare for them beforehand, the repercussions may not be what was desired. Hearing the devastating and emotional story of Mariah McCarthy's life being taken from her and her loved ones by an underage driver who had been drinking made a deep impact on my life. The loss of a vibrant life at such a young age impacted not only her family and friends, but whole communities that realized that a change needed to be made.

Accepting the challenge to refrain from the use of alcohol and drugs was not only a choice that I decided and understood, but was also a commitment that I made to myself and my family to have success in life and be more than the evils presented around me. Mariah's Challenge has guided me to make decisions that remained true to the morals that I hold deep within. Not partaking in the uncomfortable and unacceptable action of underage drinking or use of drugs has been an accomplishment in my life that I sought out to achieve when took the pledge. With the expectations set by my parents at a young age, it was understood that it would

not be acceptable if I were to ever drink, do drugs, or get into a vehicle with people who have been under the influence. Not only is making the decision to do such actions a risk of your own life and the lives of those around you, but it is also chancing the time your loved ones have with you. For me, that was enough to make the commitment to Mariah's Challenge. I am proud to have stayed strong to the mission of not getting involved in such serious and potentially detrimental actions. Being determined to stay true to my beliefs and opinions on underage drinking and alcohol use has truly changed my life and made me realize that I am free to make choices for myself but I, and those around me, will not be free from the consequences that are encompassed within the decision. Having accepted Mariah's Challenge has not only made me the person that I have always wanted to become, but has also given me the confidence and reassurance that I can achieve all that I set my mind to. Mariah's Challenge will leave an everlasting impression on my life, my future, and my successes forever and for that I am truly grateful.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has helped develop my character over my high school years. It has helped shape who I am and has made a lasting impact on my life. By not drinking while in high school, I have learned how to think and act for myself. I have not given in to peer pressure or the 'norms' for teen culture, which in turn, has led to me becoming the independent person I am now. It is not easy to be different than everyone else, especially in a sensitive time such as high school, but making the choice to accept Mariah's Challenge has made sticking out as an individual a positive thing in my life. By following what I believe to be right and making decisions for myself, I have discovered the values and morals that I find to be important and relevant in my life. I have Mariah's Challenge to thank for helping me stay true to these beliefs over the last four years of my life; it acted as a guardian angel watching out for the choices I made, and always giving me something to look to when struggling with a decision on how to act. Without Mariah's Challenge, the chances that I would have fallen into the traps of teen substance abuse are very high, so I am both lucky and thankful that I had such a strong establishment to guide me through one of the most important times in my life. Going into college next year, I will keep the guidelines developed by Mariah's Challenge a priority in my life, so that I can continue to be successful and reach all my dreams. I am so grateful I accepted Mariah's Challenge, and I appreciate all the opportunities this scholarship offers.

“Groold” is a license plate I see almost every day. Mariah McCarthy’s family lives just two houses away from me and her dad has that on his truck’s license plate. 13 years ago, “grow old” or “don’t drink before you are of legal age” are probably not words that he thought he’d need to preach to his children or the children of Butte, but life changed dramatically for Mr. McCarthy, his family, friends, and our community on a cold October night in 2007.

Now, 12+ years after that night, Mr. McCarthy has challenged thousands of young adults, like me, to adhere to his simple, but powerful words. Leo McCarthy often spoke at Hillcrest, my elementary school, about taking part in Mariah’s Challenge. Even before drinking alcohol was something that I would remotely consider, Leo was there to guide us on the dangers of underage drinking. I accepted his challenge back in 3rd grade, but each day when I see his license plate or Mariah’s cross just down the street, I’m reminded of his purpose and challenge. I work hard to find the right path or choice, even when it’s tough to do so.

In high school, drinking or using illegal substances is the “norm”. There have been times during high school that I am most certainly the odd-man-out. Often, I get the question “You don’t drink? Why not?” and my usual response consists of something along the lines of “I just do not have the desire to.” Short and brief. Of course, I have many more reasons why I choose to refrain from drinking underage. For one, it is not healthy for my body, especially my brain. Two, I have always been known as a rule follower; therefore, if my parents say “no drinking”, I will not drink. Most importantly, the reason that I have chosen to accept Mariah’s challenge is because of the morals I have set for myself. By not drinking in high school, I have respected and protected myself, the law, and those around me.

So, to answer “How has Mariah’s Challenge CHANGED my life” is an oddity because Mariah’s Challenge HAS BEEN my life. My family and I moved down the street from the McCarthy’s just six months after that horrible night. My parents routinely talked (and still do) to my siblings and myself about the dangers of underage drinking and/or drinking and driving. They can’t imagine the thought of losing one of us and how the McCarthy’s and the other families’ lives are forever changed due to the lack of insight by the young adult driver who not only was underage but also driving under the influence.

Those of us that have willingly accepted Mariah’s Challenge will help continue to turn a tragic event into something beautiful by encouraging others to take the pledge that will inevitably save lives.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When our seventh-grade class took Mariah's Challenge five years ago, I did not understand the significance it would carry. I wore my East Middle School T-Shirt and Mariah's Challenge bracelet, but I was convinced that, for me, it was not a challenge. I was determined not to become a high school kid who drank, and this challenge simply reinforced my existing determination. I had never tasted alcohol, and to this day still have not. I have never even been pressured to try substances of any kind. However, my story is an unusual one. I am painfully aware of the fact that only a small percentage of my graduating class has abstained from alcohol and drug use, some of them even coming to class under the influence. I find this fact, quite frankly, depressing. For this reason, I have maintained membership in TASC, Teens Advocating a Safer Community, since seventh grade. I am now Co-President of the organization, fighting to keep elementary and middle school students from going down the path of substance use and to keep high school students from returning to it.

Mariah's Challenge and TASC are partners in this endeavor. We have the same end goals in mind, and together, we are making a difference for kids. There are plenty of students who will graduate with me in May who did not take Mariah's Challenge to heart that day in middle school. Fortunately, although in a perfect world all of the students would have, some of the students did. I was one of them and serve as proof that there are thirteen-year-olds in Butte who hear what this foundation is saying and are listening to its values. Had I not taken Mariah's Challenge, I still would most likely not be a substance user today. However, the challenge opened my eyes to a dream that I could subscribe to: a generation of teens who did not drink in high school. These would be teens who had strong willpower, fully developed brains, and bigger priorities than impressing their peers at a party: teens who would go places in life. Then, I wanted to be one of these teens, and now, I am working to help others do the same.

Throughout middle school and high school, I have grown into a person with big dreams and the leadership skills to achieve them. I owe a lot to TASC and other mentors in my life for giving me these skills. My parents are proponents of the message of Mariah's Challenge and have always encouraged me to stand up for myself and my beliefs in the face of peer and societal pressures. I have been very careful to choose friendships with others who share my beliefs and look up to people who have similar values. Mariah's Challenge may not have had direct control over the direction my life has taken, but inadvertently, the challenge, the belief system, and the dreams that it represents have changed my life for the better.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has impacted my everyday lifestyle in many drastic ways. By taking the Challenge, I have found the best version of myself, and the person I strive to be. I have lost, and made, some friends during this challenge but that did not stop me from carrying out this pledge. It has been a life changing decision that has made me a better person. Mariah's Challenge is more than just refraining from drugs and alcohol; it is a life altering vow that will changes morals and perspective on life itself.

The single most important decision I have made throughout my high school tenure was to stay away from drugs and alcohol. I have pledged to stay away from these inadequate substances in order to better myself and boost my baseball career. While many of my peers were out partying every weekend, I was busy with late night hitting sessions and focusing on my lifelong goal of playing baseball at the next level. Instead of drinking and wasting my high school years, I put my head down and worked hard in the classroom, as an employee, and on the field. To succeed in life one must endure the challenges life presents and work to overcome these challenges.

Even though this challenge is about teens staying away from illegal substances, it has also taught me the importance of responsibility. Responsibility is something everyone should learn at an early age. As people get older, we learn that with responsibility, there is sacrifice. While many would consider the abstinence from drugs and alcohol a sacrifice, I view it as a

responsibility to myself, to my family, and to the community. The decision to drink and use drugs is the sacrifice of integrity and an irresponsible decision. High schoolers need to realize that underage drinking is a life altering action, and will ultimately limit their future success. Mariah's Challenge has helped kids like me understand this. By accepting Mariah's Challenge, I have bettered myself, my future, and my community. Mariah's Challenge has truly changed my life.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

A challenge is a call or summons to engage in one's strengths. A challenge can be a difficult thing to accomplish. Mariah's Challenge is not an easy thing for everyone to stay true to, but it is changing the mind sets of those who take it seriously and want to better the community and everyone around them.

Drinking and drug use have been a major issue in Butte for a long time now. Not only is drinking and drug use a problem with adults, but in the youth as well. When Mariah's Challenge was started, I saw how one stupid mistake could affect so many lives. I also saw how some people did not take it seriously. The same night Mariah's Challenge was launched, some people got a Minor in Possession. I have never received one and never plan to. I take Mariah's Challenge seriously and I encourage everyone I know to follow it. It's not just about respecting the challenge, it's also about respecting yourself.

Being in high school, I know what people try to do to be cool or to have fun. They drink or they get high. I have never approved of this and I have never gotten involved with it either. I have surrounded myself with smart people and good friends who know better than that. Instead of going out and getting drunk for fun, we have just as much fun hanging out in my hot tub and talking or watching movies. I know what is not good for me, and more importantly I know how to stay away from it. Mariah's Challenge has showed me that it is okay to not drink and use drugs. It has showed me that everyone in the community can come together to make a difference and honor Mariah.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

#2

We can't predict even the worst possible events until it's too late to stop the gears in motion. Mariah was a friend of my sister Josie for many years and through my sister I was able to meet this incredible person with the kindest of heart and greatest of smile. I never saw her cross or angry with anyone, and she always treated me with friendly and kind ways. Then that dreadful day came with no warning and in moments, one of the most caring and loving person I have ever had the privilege of meeting was gone. The event showed how a part of the community, the school, a friend, and more importantly a part of us can be taken away and never replaced. It showed how our hearts can be so easy to broken. From that day on, "Just going out and having fun with alcohol" seemed so irresponsible. I never was into the drinking and this only showed the consequence of doing that. I wish there was some other way to show the consequences of alcohol but it has put an imprint on me like a brand that I can never remove nor want to. When Mariah's Challenge was started, I supported it with everything I had to give. The challenge showed, fix, and strengthen my heart to do what is best not only for myself, but to reach out to others and try to show people that the choice to drink while underage and drinking and driving. Consequences that hurt not only a few close people, but an entire community. I know that Mariah's Challenge is to stop and protect us from having another horrible death like Mariah's death from happening ever again.

“What Mariah’s Challenge Has Meant to Me”

The events that have occurred in Butte in the last year have really been life changing. People have lost their loved ones, and Mariah’s Challenge has started a process to change the mentality of people so that the culture of drinking and driving is no longer acceptable. People need to take things seriously, and most have learned that drinking and driving is no longer something that will be easily tolerated.

People have realized that drinking is a very serious problem and after last years accident people might realize that we have to put an end to this problem. Not only was this a tragic accident, but it gave the Butte community a blemish it will always remember. Death is a very serious thing, and as sad as it is to say, it took an event this serious for people to realize that Montana needs to put an end to the drinking problem it has. Montana has the highest alcohol related driving accidents per capita in the United States. Hopefully this accident will help us realize as a community that we need to start changing our habits, and build a better Butte.

Mariah’s Challenge offers the opportunity for people of all generations to become a part of the dynamic’s associated with this organization. Although change can be difficult, the culture associated with drinking and driving is no longer acceptable. It is time for the community of Butte to be at the forefront of this change. Butte has a very storied and proud tradition. Let’s make this cultural change a part of the tradition.

Sincerely,

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

4

Mariah's Challenge did not change my life in a very dramatic way, but it did change my views on under aged drinking, and driving while intoxicated. I always believed that it was wrong to drink and drive, but I never did my part in helping to prevent it. If I was around a bunch of people that were drinking, I would leave and not worry about how people would be getting home that night. Now, when I'm around people that are drinking, I take the initiative to take car keys, and give rides home... even if that means shuttling people around until three in the morning.

I believe that even the little things can help, such as using a little gas to drive a friend home versus that friend getting in an accident. Or getting a group of friends together to do a fun activity that does not involve alcohol, like going cosmic bowling, or to watch a movie. Sure it may be a little expensive to go see a movie, but in reality it is a small price to pay compared to the risks of driving under the influence. These risks include ruining not only the family's life of the victim, the driver's life, but many other people being affected as well. Such as the family of the driver and the family of the victim and in some cases, a whole community can be saddened and changed by one event, such as Mariah McCarthy's accident.

When this happens, I believe that the community needs to keep changing and improving awareness of under aged drinking and its apparent dangers. Mariah's Challenge is just one way the community is moving in this direction. More movement needs to happen with laws; everyone needs to do their part in prevention.

#5

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Accepting Mariah's Challenge has improved my life in many ways. It is a decision that I will never regret. After my dad passed away in May 2007, drinking could easily have become a way for me to escape from the pain I was feeling. Until that terrible October night, I could see myself following the path of the typical Butte teenager by partying on weekends. Thankfully, the Challenge was created, giving me a better way to channel my grief.

Mariah's Challenge has made my life better by helping me realize that doing what everybody else does in order to be popular is wrong. I have no desire whatsoever to change my lifestyle and the person I am in order to be considered "cool." Accepting Mariah's Challenge has helped me discover who I truly am because I have the strength to say "no," reinforced by the knowledge that I have the Challenge to live up to. I know that deciding to not drink alcohol is the smartest choice, though sadly not one made by many Butte teenagers.

Mariah's Challenge has also affected my ability to influence others. As a big sister, a baby-sitter and a varsity athlete, I have the opportunity to be a role model to younger children. The Challenge encourages me to strive to be the best person that I can be for those children, and to demonstrate a teenage lifestyle that is far safer and smarter.

My dad's death and the tragic accident that took Mariah's life have made me realize that every life is vitally important, and should not be forgotten. By accepting Mariah's Challenge, I hope that I, along with many others, am contributing to help create positive change in Butte.

How Mariah's Challenge has Changed My Life

6

Mariah's Challenge has influenced my life in very many ways. I have never had a drink in my entire life and Mariah's Challenge has made that an easier task because it gives me a great reason not to drink at all. I have been offered alcohol numerous times throughout my life and in my High School Career and I have always refused it, but since I have been involved in Mariah's Challenge, it has made it a whole lot easier for me to say no to alcohol. Because I am involved, I can say, "No, I will have no part of being in the presence of alcohol", and people seem to understand that reason more than any other one possible. Mariah's Challenge has also brought my friends and me closer because we have realized that drinking is not at all cool and we can have much more fun doing different activities. I think Mariah's Challenge is having an amazing impact on our community as well because people are beginning to see the real dangers of alcohol. Since Mariah's Challenge, our community has been heading down the right path and that has had the greatest impact on my family and me. If it has had impact on my family and me, then I know it has on other families as well and that is exactly what this community needs to keep on the right path toward no underage drinking. I have not had a drink of alcohol at all throughout my life and I owe a bunch of that credit to Mariah's Challenge because of what it has helped me to accomplish and I truly believe that not drinking while underage is a great achievement.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship

My name is Justin Rowling I am 17 years old and a senior attending Butte High School. Mariah's Challenge has opened my eyes to the many consequences one might have to live with when they drink alcohol. Mariah's challenge has pushed me even more toward the urge not to drink while under the age. I can honestly say I have never had a drink of alcohol! I have been a very dedicated person to the things I like to do. When I reach the legal age to drink, I still do not know for sure if will have a drink but if I do, there will always be a designated driver. Mariah's Challenge has educated me on the dangers of drinking and driving. Mariah's Challenge not only affected my life and how I look at drinking and driving but I have also seen the affects it has had with other people's lives. The Challenge has affected more than just teenagers, it has affected every age group within Butte, the State of Montana, and many other parts of the United States. I just hope that Mariah's Challenge keeps spreading completely around the world so that all people are affected by the many positives that have come out of this painful tragedy. People need to know more about the effects of drinking and driving. It is an honor for me to accept Mariah's Challenge.

8

Judge-2 17
ME

The Affect of Mariah's Challenge on Me

While brainstorming about ideas for the Mariah's Challenge scholarship essay, I tried to pick the most significant way the challenge has affected me out of the numerous choices. The process was strenuous and I could not decide which one I wanted to write about. Then, last weekend I was babysitting my three year old cousin Cami. We were baking cookies, one of her personal favorites, when I had my epiphany. The reason I accept the challenge is because of that beautiful little girl I was baking with.

That afternoon Cami wanted to be just like her cousin Hannah. I had my hair in a messy bun with a purple headband. As soon as she arrived at my house, she had to have her hair in a messy bun with a headband too. We looked like twins. While we were waiting for the cookies to bake, I was asking her questions about daycare, boyfriends, etc. She said something along the lines of, "When I'm big and play basketball for the Lady Bulldogs like you." After she said that, I realized she has dreams of growing up to be like me. This little girl has chosen me as her role model and looks up to me. The Challenge was affecting my life, while affecting the lives around me at the same time, which is equally important.

I want Cami and every other child to have a positive role model that makes good choices and that they can truly learn from. As her idol, I need to be showing her the best possible examples, and by accepting Mariah's Challenge I am fulfilling my duty. I want Butte's youth to know that an exciting teenage life doesn't require partying. I hope Cami continues to follow in my footsteps by playing Lady Bulldog basketball, but more importantly, by accepting Mariah's Challenge.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

9

October 28, 2007, was a life-changing day for the Butte community. A young life was lost because of an impaired decision; drinking and driving. It was a tragedy no one saw coming and most didn't know how to deal with the circumstances. Still the tears seemed to reach everyone in the community, even those lacking close ties to the family. Together, the community mourned the event and was forced to face the consequences of a long time tradition. We were shown the realities of what seems so impossible. We were made aware of the fact that no matter how much we think, "It will never happen to me," tragedies can happen to anyone.

I remember waking up the morning of the twenty-ninth and hearing the awful news. That news shook me, rattled my world. I felt heartbroken, sorrow, and wishful thoughts, for everyone involved. And now, looking back, over a year later, a part of me is still heartbroken. However, I have learned to be proud, more confident, and stick up for myself and the ones I love.

I have been unknowingly touched by an angel. I have been shown the proof that realities strike close to home. Accidents can and do happen, and some do not turn out for the better. But, instead of looking down upon such an event, our community has looked forward and turned this horrible event into a learning experience. This accident has added an even deeper meaning to Butte Tough. It is not only showing you are tough physically, but mentally as well. We should not only be the ones saying no, but the friends that say no for others, for those who can't or do not know how to say no. I am , and I am proud to be Butte Tough.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My name is _____, and I am a senior at Butte High School. I consider myself lucky to have known Mariah McCarthy, and to be a friend of the McCarthy family. I have been a part of Mariah's Challenge since the start. It is an amazing thing, and is having a tremendous effect on the city of Butte. Now, more than ever, it is obvious that Butte is in dire need of a serious change. Taking action, and being a part of that change elevates me, and brings me a sense of self-satisfaction.

Attending high school, especially in Butte, Montana, drinking is typically considered a norm. Peer-pressure makes it very easy to misconstrue right and wrong for "cool" and "uncool." Teenagers can be quick to judge, and high school can leave a person on pins and needles, where one wrong move decreases their social status. I am a Mariah's Messenger, trying to change the idea that drinking is something cool to do, and it is sad that this makes me a minority in Butte High School. It's sad to see people my age act as if their weekend parties are just harmless fun, all the while they are aware that one of their peers died just over a year ago because someone was having some of that harmless fun.

I know in my heart that drinking is wrong, and we can change Butte, Montana. Leo brought us together, and a big change starts with a small group. Mariah's Challenge gives us the power to stand up and say "No, drinking is not cool." Mariah's Challenge is making Butte High School a place where drinking is not cool, and everyone is accepted. That's the kind of place that Mariah McCarthy would have wanted it to be.

How Has Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life?

Mariah's Challenge has made a difference in my life in more ways than one. The death and injury of people that I knew personally initially sent shockwaves through this entire community, and opened the eyes of many people to the dangers of drinking and driving. When the Mariah's Challenge Scholarship program was announced I saw it as a way for not only the families involved, but the entire Butte community, to begin the healing process because it is a way for so much good to come from this horrible event.

I have never had a hard time with peer pressure or "just saying no" to drugs and alcohol, but thanks to Mariah's Challenge, I feel like it is now cool to refuse. In some ways it has almost made me feel like I am part of a popular peer group, rather than an outsider.

Even though I have never needed an incentive to stay away from alcohol, the Challenge offers a chance to be rewarded for all the years I have remained true to my values. Mariah's Challenge has also changed the way many of my peers look at alcohol use. I'm sad it took a tragic event like the death of a young and beautiful girl to show young people that there are consequences to their actions, but I'm glad that Mariah's Challenge has made a difference to my generation of Butte teens.

12

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

In some cases, a devastating tragedy can spark a flame; that burns into the beautiful fire of a movement. Mariah’s Challenge is one of those cases. After the loss of a beautiful young lady, Mariah McCarthy, Mariah’s Challenge was formed. I can personally say that Mariah’s Challenge has affected my life and changed the lives of those around me.

I can honestly say that I have never consumed alcohol or done drugs of any kind. Before I entered high school, I made a decision to not drink or do drugs, but I underestimated the strength of the challenges I would face. Entering my junior year, the pressure to drink and to do drugs was really pressing down on me, tempting me to break my commitment. Peer pressure and the want to “fit in” made my goal seem farther and farther from my reach. Unfortunately, I believe that I would not have had the strength to resist the temptation of drinking, if it were not for the tragedy that impacted our town, with the loss of Mariah. Accepting Mariah’s Challenge, has given me the chance to restate my desire to stay alcohol and drug free, and reinforce the foundation on which to keep it.

My life is not the only one that has been touched by the long reach of Mariah’s challenge. Countless teens in my everyday life have accepted Mariah’s Challenge, turning their lives in complete one-eighties, and starting them on paths that will lead to promising futures.

I pray that the beautiful spark that was Mariah’s life will continue to light a flame in the hearts of Butte’s youth, as it has done in mine.

Sincerely,

As teenagers we often live life as though we are invincible and are never afraid to put something off, at least until tomorrow. However, if we are always waiting for tomorrow we will never act today. Mariah's Challenge made me realize the importance of making an impact in others' lives today, because you never know if tomorrow is going to come. This past October as president of Teens Advocating a Safe Community (TASC) I was approached by the local YMCA to see if the coalition would be interested in hosting a chemical-free Halloween party at their facility. While this task seemed daunting at first and I was skeptical as to whether or not the event would be well-attended, I soon realized that if we were able to prevent one teenager from partaking in alcohol or drug related activities that evening, it would be a success. When over 400 teenagers attended the Halloween event, I knew that by taking action sooner, rather than later, we had made the right decision for the teens in our community. By the end of the evening it was evident that the success of the event was augmented by Mariah's Challenge's efforts throughout the community that include increased awareness of the negative consequences associated with consuming alcohol and the importance of participating in safe community activities. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge I have realized the importance of James Dean's words, "Dream as if you will live forever, live as if you will die tomorrow." We must act today if we are going to change tomorrow.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life."

Photography has always been a huge part of my life and when I was fourteen I had the honor to speak with a professional photographer. The thing that he told me that I remember most is, "One thing that is very important in an artist's career is to pick a organization that means something to you. and when your art is sold. have that organization benefit from it. Make sure you take your time in choosing your organization and make sure it means something to you, it will help you find the true meaning of your art." This has always stuck with me and the minute Leo talked about the challenge at Mariah's funeral, I knew this was it. This represented me perfectly, I have been fortunate enough to have a great group of friends that is not dependent on alcohol to have fun and we know we can have fun by taking part in other pastimes. When I was preparing for AnRiRa in August. I knew that Mariah loved her Irish heritage and background. So I designed a one of a kind collage of Butte photos and put it up for silent auction, one hundred percent of the proceeds benefitting Mariah's Challenge. This was the first photo of mine to be associated with Mariah's Challenge. The feedback from people was amazing, I had the privilege of hearing people's personal stories and how they have been touched by Mariah's Challenge. and I also had the privilege of spreading the story myself to people from around the country that hadn't heard the story. Many people were very interested and took down the website so they could further research this great project, all while jotting down a bid for the collage. This is the moment when I go back to the quote and believe what that guy told me from day one. you really find the true meaning of your art by doing something good with it. From that point on I decided art was my destiny, I started looking at art schools around the country. I was selected for a phone interview from the Art Institute of Seattle, one of the greatest honors of my life. During the phone interview, the guy interviewed me and asked many crueling questions. When he asked what I do with my art in my community, I told him my story, from the very beginning. He was touched and I gave him the website so he could share the story with his coworkers and family. Four weeks later. I was accepted to the Art Institute of Seattle, the greatest accomplishment of my life. I think Mariah was watching over me that day. along with many other angels.

Being accepted to the Art Institute of Seattle has always been a dream of mine, I knew I had to attempt to go there. but a dream that has been even bigger in my life is to become an Architect. I have made the decision to stay closer to home and attend Montana State University to major in Architecture and hopefully minor in Photography. Even if I don't get the photography degree, I still plan to have photography as a hobby for life. I am still in the very beginning stages of having a career in photography. but I know I will always keep Mariah's Challenge as my organization for my art work, no matter where I am in the world, I will always spread the word. This is my story of how Mariah's Challenge has changed my life.

938

15

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The shock of Mariah's horrific accident really frightened me because I have a little sister who is my best friend. My little sister means the world to me and I would never make it through life without her. Jenna has to go through every day of her life without her sister, a thing I can't even imagine. I could never be responsible for taking the joy out of someone's life because I was reckless and wanted to "have fun." I see Jenna every day at school and I could never face myself again if I drank. Drinking is so selfish and after seeing what it can do to a family I will never drink and drive.

Butte has always been portrayed as a partying town where it was acceptable to drink no matter what age the person is. I must admit I used to perceive the "cool popular kids" as the ones who drank. That all changed after Mariah's accident. Drinking isn't just an extra-curricular activity, it is a disastrous problem that takes lives. I also used to find joking around about alcohol funny, but no longer. There is absolutely nothing funny about risking someone else's life because you are driving drunk. Drinking and Driving is like playing Russian Roulette with yours and someone else's life. I would never take a gun and put it to someone else's head and pull the trigger just hoping the bullet wasn't in the chamber. Human lives are so precious and we often forget that people have families and friends that love and care deeply about them. This catastrophe has removed all desire to ever drink and hearing Mariah's Challenge commercial on the radio reminds me every day of the pain caused by it.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

16

We are taught that one of the reasons for studying history is to learn from our ancestors' experiences and mistakes, so that we do not repeat these mistakes and be subjected to the same consequences. We have also been taught that our human condition is finite and imperfect, and as a result, all of us will make some of the same mistakes as those in past generations and those in our every day lives.

Understanding the human condition has helped me as I struggle with the questions why, what and how? Why do bad things happen to great people? What good could ever come of this tragedy? What good can we take from this tragedy and share with today's youth and future generations? How can I channel the grief, sorrow, anger, healing and forgiveness to transform my life and the lives of others for the greater good?

Mariah's Challenge was the good taken from this tragedy. The program has created great inspiration for me and others not to drink underage or drink and drive. Also, the people associated with Mariah's Challenge have been a great inspiration of hope and love for me and many of the students affected by this tragedy. I hope the success I had with my goal of not drinking throughout high school helps symbolize Mariah's Challenge and helps set a new higher standard of conduct for Butte youth.

Mariah's Challenge has inspired me to continue to live by its theme – "No stinkin drinkin!" throughout my college years. I hope my example leads others to join Mariah's Challenge and brings people to the realization that we can learn from this mistake to ensure no one else suffers the same consequences of this terrible tragedy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit an application and essay for the Mariah's Challenge scholarship fund.

The Affect of Mariah's Challenge on Me

While brainstorming about ideas for the Mariah's Challenge scholarship essay, I tried to pick the most significant way the challenge has affected me out of the numerous choices. The process was strenuous and I could not decide which one I wanted to write about. Then, last weekend I was babysitting my three year old cousin Cami. We were baking cookies, one of her personal favorites, when I had my epiphany. The reason I accept the challenge is because of that beautiful little girl I was baking with.

That afternoon Cami wanted to be just like her cousin Hannah. I had my hair in a messy bun with a purple headband. As soon as she arrived at my house, she had to have her hair in a messy bun with a headband too. We looked like twins. While we were waiting for the cookies to bake, I was asking her questions about daycare, boyfriends, etc. She said something along the lines of, "When I'm big and play basketball for the Lady Bulldogs like you." After she said that, I realized she has dreams of growing up to be like me. This little girl has chosen me as her role model and looks up to me. The Challenge was affecting my life, while affecting the lives around me at the same time, which is equally important.

I want Cami and every other child to have a positive role model that makes good choices and that they can truly learn from. As her idol, I need to be showing her the best possible examples, and by accepting Mariah's Challenge I am fulfilling my duty. I want Butte's youth to know that an exciting teenage life doesn't require partying. I hope Cami continues to follow in my footsteps by playing Lady Bulldog basketball, but more importantly, by accepting Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I was raised in a family that does not turn to alcohol for any sort of help in life. For this I am greatly appreciative to them. My friends are also against drinking and they provide a strong support to me.

All my life I have believed that drugs and alcohol are just a temptation that will sooner or later bring me down. They tend to impair our judgment which leads to bad decisions. I do not want to loose my life or take someone else's for a few minutes of "happiness." Also, I do not want to cause the birth of someone that would be dear to me at the wrong moment and/or with the wrong person.

Anyone who believes that taking these harmful substances into their bodies makes them cool are just making fools of themselves. If only they could see how they *really* act when under these influences, they might change their minds about using them. And the long term consequences of addiction, cancer, or even death does not shine a light on the case either. I've seen and heard of families that were ripped apart from members who had addiction problems. I do not see how they could harm their families for something so stupid. I have long ago made a promise that I would never do this or marry someone who would do this to my family.

After the fateful day that we lost Mariah McCartney, I immediately saw a difference in the students at school. It seems that kids are more willing to participate in community service. I've noticed that several have taken the pledge of Mariah's Challenge, and whenever I see them wearing the t-shirts, hope is brought back to my heart that maybe the world is finally changing for the better. After all, a big change is

brought about by small steps.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

19

Alcohol clearly has an effect on those who consume it. But what's less obvious is the widespread impact an irresponsible act, resulting from drinking, can have on a community and its individuals. As Nancy Reagan clearly puts it, "Today, there is a drug and alcohol abuse epidemic in this country. And no one is safe from it—not you, not me and certainly not our children, because this epidemic has their names written on it". The death of Mariah McCarthy was shocking news. Her death has left a lasting mark on our community.

My sister is friends with one of the three girls who were struck by the drunk driver's vehicle. What if my sister had been killed instead? That would be devastating.

For me, I have chosen to avoid alcohol. In my family, there's a strong genetic tendency toward alcoholism on both my parent's sides, of which I am prone to possess. So, alcohol experimentation on my part might easily lead to an addiction and a destructive lifestyle. I know enough family members and friends who've been involved in its misuse and felt its repercussions.

Although Mariah's Challenge didn't initially cause me to make decisions concerning alcohol, I am now pleased to witness what it has accomplished in the community and to see its continual spread. It gives me hope.

The use of alcohol evidently has prevailing consequences. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge, I now have a stronger position concerning the effects of alcohol, and optimism for future generations. "There is no greater challenge than to have someone relying upon you; no greater satisfaction than to vindicate his expectation" (Kingman Brewster). I believe it's our duty to spread the message that Mariah's Challenge presents of promoting healthy lifestyles, and abstaining from alcohol.

20

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life."

From the moment I learned of the horrific accident my life had changed. For a long time none of it seemed real to me, I would find myself asking, "How could this have happened?" Part of me still doesn't want to believe that it actually happened in our community.

Due to the decision Wade Peterson made to drink and drive that night, my life started to take a different course. My freshman year I thought drinking was cool and something fun to do on weekends. Growing up in a party town made it easier to participate in the drinking activities. Being a naïve freshman I believed that if I drank the upperclassmen would think more highly of me. By sophomore year, I became bored with drinking, and I began drinking less often.

The morning of October 28, 2008 was my blunt wake up call. I made a vow that morning to myself, hugging my broken-hearted brother, to stop all of my partying completely.

The beginning was hard because my friends still wanted to go out and party but I couldn't even look at a beer bottle without thinking of that night. Some of my friends even quit calling me to hang out because I didn't want to party with them. I learned that if they didn't support my choices then they weren't my true friends to begin with.

I took my vow to Mariah's Challenge because I never want to see something like this take place in our community again. With my decision not to drink I hope it encourages others to do the same.

21

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The founding of Mariah's Challenge had a great impact on the community of Butte, especially its youth. As a Butte teenager, my mindset drastically changed upon the introduction of the Challenge.

Mariah's Challenge opened my eyes to the true consequences of drinking. I no longer viewed underage drinking as acceptable and risk-free. The reality of the damages inflicted by drinking finally hit home for me. I recounted the instances in which my own friends did the same thoughtless action, but miraculously they made it home unscathed.

I am an eighteen year old girl from Butte, Montana who does not drink. In itself, the quality of sobriety in a girl my age is rare, regardless of location. I witnessed first hand what underage drinking can do to a person and their dreams. I watched as my older sister destroyed her plans and goals all just so she could "party". At a very young age I made a vow to not engage in such reckless activity in order to hold on to not only my dreams, but my reputation.

My views on drinking never faltered as I entered high school, but even though I did not drink, I never found fault in others' choices. Since Mariah's Challenge was initiated, I've seen that underage drinking is not tolerable and needs to be stopped. And while it is still up to each teenager to make a choice about drinking, I strongly believe that Mariah's Challenge has curbed such activity in many of Butte's teens.

Mariah's Challenge changed my view and opinions on underage drinking, and it also reinforced my own decision not to drink. The institution has done a large deed to the

Butte community and has succeeded in helping to decrease underage drinking and harmful, unwise drinking habits.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

It has been a little over a year since the loss of Mariah McCarthy, a tragic impact, left by drinking and driving, on the Butte community. But many Butte High students have accepted Mariah's Challenge, and promote individual responsibility and healthy lifestyles, and do not drink and drive. I accept Mariah's Challenge, and I'm applying the challenge requirements to my life, now that I'm taking on more responsibility.

Now that I'm preparing to get my driver's license, I'm becoming more aware of what happens on the road. I've learned that judgment is everything when behind the wheel, and the road can be dangerous enough without the abuse of alcohol. Mariah's Challenge has changed the way I view my driving skills; there is always room for improvement, and one must be wary of others on the road. The responsibility I'll gain with independent driving will grow, as I will have to know how to handle hazards in my driving environment. The more accountable I am for my actions, the safer my community will be.

Mariah's Challenge has also changed the way I view my lifestyle. Although there may be peer pressure in high school to drink and do drugs, I've kept my life drug free, and plan to keep it that way. I don't see myself as sheltered, I see myself as a healthy and responsible individual, who does not adhere to the crowd with damaging habits.

I, for one, am proud to take a stand against the use of drugs and alcohol. Mariah's Challenge is now a big factor for change in Butte and in my life. I want Butte to become a better and safer place to live, and I accept Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge was an idea to stop underage drinking brought into the community after the death of Mariah. For me, it was much more. I see the Challenge as a peer support system for adults and kids alike. Now, kids can say no to drinking and adults can say no to driving drunk through the challenge. Of course, we had the ability to voice that opinion before, but now, peers consider it acceptable and respectable. Mariah's Challenge did what no one person could do in the last fifty years. It redefined the way our community thinks about drinking by changing the acceptability of teen drinking into accountability for those actions.

Personally, I believe that Mariah's Challenge was the best thing that could happen to the community as a whole. Mariah's death was painful to everyone, but her death has altered our community mindset. Who knows how many are safe because of smart decisions that diverted disaster. An innocent girl's death was a high price to pay for clarity into our culture. The McCarthy family has paid the ultimate price, now it is up to the teens and adults of Butte to honor her memory by altering our identity.

Mariah's Challenge has truly changed my life. I understand what it is to be pressured by peers into making the wrong choice. The knowledge that there is a support group behind me is a great comfort when saying no. I feel like someone cares whether or not I say no. This feeling is enough for me to stay strong in my decision not to drink. Without Mariah's Challenge I would not have been able to resist this long. More importantly, I have seen how Mariah's Challenge affected my peers. Mariah's Challenge has truly changed the way teens, including me, see underage drinking.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

When we go through the journey of life we, as individuals, are shaped by the experiences and situations that we come into contact with. While there are some experiences and situations that mold us in a positive manner there are always those moments which we would rather forget. Either way, however, we are influenced by those experiences and they in turn create who we become in the future. I believe that Mariah's Challenge is an event that has changed the mindset of Butte, Montana and will continue to do so for the years to come.

As we grow up and become involved within the high school environment, the aspect of drinking becomes prevalent among the students. While most students say that they are not going to fall into the realm of drinking while in high school, very few tend to prevail with their initial intent. While those around me began to fall victim to the influences of alcohol, I promised myself that I would abstain from drinking through my high school career and until I was of legal age to do so. I have thus far prevailed with my intent to not become involved in drinking, and Mariah's Challenge has reassured me that I am not alone in my journey.

Mariah's Challenge has helped in my realization that sometimes it is best not to fit the average mold and that by becoming my own individual and not just becoming another face in the crowd will aid me in a positive manner for the rest of my life. Following Mariah's Challenge aspects and guidelines will help shape me into the person that I become in the future and will in turn change my life for the better.

26

MARIAH'S CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ESSAY

My name is Candice West. I am currently attending Butte High School and will graduate in June 2009. Here is my essay on why I would like to be considered for the Mariah's Challenge Scholarship.

My parents have always instilled good ethics in us children from a young age. Both of my parents did not believe in drinking and set a solid and good example for us to follow. The example in which they set was while others would indulge in casual drinking at various occasions: birthday parties, graduation parties, holidays and family get-togethers, my parents would decline on drinking and would stay with water or pop. They too, had the peer pressure of drinking from their colleagues, family and friends. The choices that they made set an example for me to say "no" to drinking and drugs. My parents told me that if I attended a party and there was drinking involved I could call them for a ride home or use them as an excuse to leave a party. Trust was something I knew I could depend on from both my parents. They were grateful for the choices I have made during my high school years and support my decisions.

Because of my strong family support and ethics, I know that the decisions I have made not to drink has been a wise one. The ads about drinking don't affect other young teenagers until it happens close to home. You can encourage teenagers not to drink but the best result is by example. If someone tells you that drinking and driving has a large impact on your future, they are correct. Every example you set creates an action that makes them accountable. You read about friends going out together and getting in a car accident, one friend lives the other dies and both of their lives are changed due to drinking and driving forever.

With the loss of my father in July 2008, it has been a financial hardship on the family. I had to make different choices in my life my senior year, which has impacted my participation in scholastic programs. Although I made these changes with little regret, it has shown me the effects that alcohol has on a family and their lives. For myself, I had a father that would back me on anything I would need or do and a mother whose love and support helped me through some tough times. Upon my father's death, it was the children's decision to support Mariah's Challenge by encouraging those who wanted to make a donation in my father's name to do so to Mariah's Challenge. My father felt that this program was a start in promoting the choice of not drinking and driving amongst teenagers.

Mariah's Challenge will give me an opportunity to full-fill my dreams by attending college and bettering my future. Hopefully by my example, I can change the decisions of younger teenagers to say "no" to drinking and driving. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to apply for a scholarship through Mariah's Challenge.

Sincerely,

8 BF

27

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

The Mariah's Challenge Foundation has changed the lives of many Butte citizens. As a resident of Butte I've witnessed many changes in my friend's drinking behavior, the choices adults make when alcohol is presented to them around children, and how much stronger and united our community has become since the fateful night of Mariah's death. But, most importantly, Mariah's Challenge has affected me. Mariah's Challenge has had a huge impact on my life in three ways; the group of friends I hang out with, my involvement in softball, and my newly-founded friendship with Valarie Kilmer and Katilyn Okrusch.

I have many friends that continue to drink even after Mariah's accident. I've made the very difficult decision to stop being around them when I know that they're going out to a party. This has been very hard for me because many of them are good friends, but because of the initiative I've taken to not drink, some of my friends are realizing that they too do not need to drink in order to have a good time.

The 2008 softball season for the Butte High School team was bitter-sweet. The team took a wonderful third place at the state tournament, but had to leave some of the players behind. Two of my team members chose to drink one night during the season and were caught and charged with MIP's. This was a major blow to the team. Both girls were suspended from the team and stripped of their letters. The action of our team members was an embarrassment for the softball program. Since then they have made wiser decisions and are awaiting this year's tryouts.

Lastly and most importantly I have met both girls that were with Mariah the night she died, Valarie and Kaitlyn. I have been lifting partners with both of them in our weights class, and I've seen the impact Mariah's death has had on them. I know that I wouldn't be nearly as strong as they have been if my best friend had been taken away from me.

Mariah's Challenge has prompted me to be a good role model and set better examples for younger kids and athletes. The program has had a positive impact on me personally and I know that future students will make wiser decisions when it comes to drinking.

28

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

February 2009

Mariah's Challenge opened my eyes to drinking and driving as a problem that must be brought under control. Driving is a big responsibility; it should not be taken lightly. A person can be killed with a vehicle, driving is no game, and is not to be messed with. One always has to be on the alert even when driving sober. But when someone drinks and then gets behind the wheel they do not realize they are endangering themselves and anyone that is out, either walking or driving. Drinking and driving is not a game, it is not funny, and it is serious. Nothing enrages me more than a person drinking and driving. My anger at hearing about people drinking and driving has grown with Mariah's Challenge.

Things can be done to fix this trend of drinking and driving. Laws can be passed to make it easier for those drinking to receive rides home. Bars can take an incentive to call taxis or the police. Adults can become responsible in having a designated driver. Teens can be more responsible and wait until they are of legal age to drink or not drink at all. There does need to be a change in the way Butte views drinking. We can still keep it part of the culture of Butte, but we can do it in a safe and responsible way. More people need to take a stand and accept Mariah's Challenge.

-How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life-

Mariah's Challenge, born from the tears of an all-too-common, senseless tragedy, has bred rebellion within me. The Challenge gave me a reason to fight against the culture that Butte has embraced; I'm talking about the culture where alcohol abuse is rampant and arguably even trendy. When Leo testified that the only "mining camp" thing about Butte is our embrace of vice, this writer changed.

I was born and raised in Butte as was most of my family as far back as anyone can recall. When I used to tell friends that my "granpa" was a boilermaker, I heard a large number of them say, "Isn't that a drink?" My grandfather on my mother's side is one of the proudest men that I know, with some of the strongest ethics I've ever heard of. He truly is grateful for everything that he has. With two daughters and three grandchildren, he brags about each of them to anyone who will listen. Yet, there are stories about how he drinks Vodka. Perhaps that is why the best praise he has ever offered my mother was that she was the only adult in the family who could "stop at one beer."

Mariah's Challenge opened my eyes to how typical these things are in Butte. That's why I took and adhered to the Challenge. I also wrote a bill taking the Challenge statewide. Senate Bill 450 was pigeonholed, but it jolted the state, even appearing on "Montana Today." It's my hope that the Challenge continues to grow, and that I may someday help the same people who helped me instead of folding under grief. I will always be thankful to the Challenge for reminding myself and our old town that the fabled Silver Lining is not at the top of a beer mug.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in significant ways. I have become more responsible with all of my decisions. The challenge has made me a better role model for younger kids, my own peers, and even adults. I am a tap teacher at the Dynamic Dance and Tumbling Academy and also a member of the competing teams, and I know that if I was to be caught drinking, my job would not exist anymore. I would be fired immediately. I would be taken off a team or all of them. The parents would look down on me, and my self-confidence would be crushed. I have known my whole life that drinking underage is not even worth the consequences that would be brought upon the person. I know that I am a strong individual, emotionally, physically, and morally. I am able to say no when I am offered an alcoholic beverage. I will tell you the truth because I am an honest person. Yes, I have been offered a beverage before, and I have refused it. I take on my responsibilities with pride, respect, and awareness.

The challenge has made me realize my dreams for my future, and alcohol is not in the picture. I know that I can wait to drink alcohol until I am legal to do so. When my friends and I hang out together, we always do stuff that does not involve alcohol. We have great games nights, movie nights, and other fun things. The challenge has made me realize my self worth to my family and community. I am so grateful that everyone in my life is so involved and for Mariah's Challenge because it has made me a better person in today's world.

How has Mariah's Challenge changed my life?

I went to bed the night of October 27th just as I had every Saturday night. It didn't seem any different from previous Saturdays, I had been over at my best friend's house watching a movie and drove home to jump in bed and sleep in for my last day of the weekend. When I woke up that Sunday morning, my life changed forever. When I looked at my phone and saw that I had three missed calls and a ridiculous number of new text messages, it was then that I realized that something was wrong. When I opened the first message it said, "Last night three girls were in a terrible accident, Mariah, Kaitlyn and Valerie." My heart dropped. I read the next text message which said, "Danielle is Kaitlyn alright?" I immediately broke down and started to cry.

I started to scan my brain thinking of the last time I had heard from my cousin Kaitlyn McGrath. It was just earlier that summer when I had gone to Missoula with Mariah, Kaitlyn (my cousin), and a few more of Kaitlyn's friends for her birthday. I called my aunt and asked her if Kaitlyn was alright, thinking all along that Kaitlyn McGrath was one of the culprits of an underage drinking massacre. She said, "Kaitlyn wasn't doing well because of the news that one of her best friends was no longer alive." My heart skipped a beat; my cousin Kaitlyn McGrath wasn't the Kaitlyn that was with Mariah that night that heaven opened their gates for her. I sat there for a few seconds, just thinking about what it would have been like if my cousin still wasn't here.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in a few different ways. First, Mariah's Challenge has taught me that you must appreciate the time that you have with your family and your friends because you never know what can happen because of poor choices. Furthermore, Mariah's Challenge has taught me to take a different look and perspective on life, mainly on cause and effect, because everything that you do has an effect. I like to think about it like dropping a small stone in a river, the ripples keep moving until they hit the shore.

How Mariah's Challenge has Changed my Life

Hello my name is [redacted] and I am a senior in high school. I believe Mariah's Challenge is a great program that rewards teenagers for living their lives in a safe and healthy way. For me, Mariah's Challenge has encouraged me to take a stand for what I believe in. From the time I entered high school, I heard stories about my friends and classmates getting drunk and doing things they were not supposed to do. I tried to push them not to drink but most of the time I didn't have enough courage to stand out against them. I always said to myself that it would take a tragedy to make my school change and that is exactly what happened. Unfortunately, this tragedy didn't have exactly the kind of effect I thought it would. After the shock of the accident wore off many of my classmates went back to doing exactly what they did before. This was like a turning point in my life. I realized that if I wanted to see change I needed to take a stand and make that change happen. Mariah's Challenge has encouraged me to stand for what I think is right not only in my personal life, but also when it came to voicing my opinion.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

At the time of Mariah's death I was only a sophomore at Butte High School. I did not know Mariah personally, but many of my friends did. They were stunned to find out that they would no longer be able to talk to her or ever see her again. My friends were trying to cope with the loss and I was left finding that I could offer little to comfort them. The halls of Butte High seemed quieter for the longest time and the city of Butte was shaken. The attitude that drinking and driving was an acceptable thing began to change. Before, the dangers of drinking and driving were casually swept under the rug and overlooked. Sadly it took a tragedy to finally open Butte's eyes and make them see the true extent of the problem.

Seeing the sadness of those that knew Mariah deeply affected me. The only thing I could do was to listen to the stories my friends told. I felt that I should have been able to do something to help them. There was of course nothing more that I could have done. This made me realize just how much our actions can affect people. The choices we make, as harmless as they may seem, can resound throughout an entire community. Our choices can unintentionally inflict great pain and suffering on others and even destroy lives.

I am now a Senior and almost done with my last year at Butte High. At the age of seventeen I have never drank or done drugs. Since the beginning of my high school career I have grown and like to think of myself a little wiser than when I first started. However, my beliefs and values have remained constant throughout. Mariah's death has served to strengthen those beliefs. I have remained true to myself and have lived up to Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge Had Changed My Life

I took my own challenge when I was younger not to drink. It wasn't until the accident that I took it very seriously. All my friends always peer pressure me into trying to drink and they always ask why don't I drink, they say I'm missing out in life. All of that is stupid I think. I make my own decisions and have taken the challenge and will not drink until I am 21. The challenge has changed my life by seeing why drinking under the age is a bad thing to do as well as not very smart. My friends decide to drink on occasional times. As a good friend, I make the decision on driving them around so they won't do anything stupid when they are drunk like drive themselves. I take the initiative on being the designated driver whenever I can so another accident does not occur.

Knowing that I am one of the few people in my senior class and other classes that has never drank before, gives me an extra boost to change my life and take the challenge to the end. When I am studying next year for my pre-veterinarian degree I will be trying my hardest to get excellent grades and not out partying every night. To still have that challenge in the back of my mind not to be stupid and intoxicate myself will be a tremendous feeling of a goal that I intend on succeeding at. My family and some friends have been very proud of me for what goal I have accepted on behalf of Mariah's Challenge. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life for the best and I, accept Mariah's Challenge.

Mariah's challenge has changed my life because it strengthened my desire not to drink and have a sober high school life. Being a part Teens Advocating a Safe Community (TASC) and Teens In Partnership (TIP) has also put me into positions where I am able to advocate against it and provide safe alternatives to students during festivals in Butte. I have been a member of TASC for four years, participating in dinners, schools talks, substance free dances and many other events that have allowed me to see that in order to provide a safe future we must take care of the children. My favorite experience in TASC was my sophomore year when I went to Hillcrest and spoke to a class about the effects of alcohol and drugs. TIP is also a great activity that I have been given the opportunity to be involved in. I have been a member for three years and I really have learned a lot from those experiences. Mariah's Challenge has been a major goal in my life that I have been able to successfully fulfill allowing me to live a safer life. I love the idea of being able to help the youth of Butte and be able to provide information about my life being better without the use of alcohol, knowing that when I drive or walk down the street I will be safe. Had Mariah's challenge not existed I still would have gone through high school as a person who doesn't drink. I firmly disbelieve in underage drinking, for the simple facts of the terrible consequences it can put on a person. I am Andrea Cocergine and I believe that Mariah's Challenge has bettered my life because it reinforces the reasons that I should not drink. This challenge has not been hard for me and I am a firm believer of providing Butte a safe community therefore I am willing to help others obtain a better lifestyle.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Twentyseven is the number of times I traveled to Salt Lake for medical care in 2009. **Seventeen** is the number of surgeries I have had. **Eight** is the age I was when I was diagnosed with three diseases that most people can't pronounce. **Five** is the number of words that I live by everyday – "Never, Never, Never Give Up" by Winston Churchill. **Zero** is how much I complain.

When I was eight years old and in the 3rd grade, I was diagnosed with Scoliosis, Chiari Malformation, and Syringomyelia. Scoliosis is a curvature of the spine. Chiari Malformation is when the cerebellum tonsils protrude into the spinal cord and does not allow free flow of cerebrospinal fluid. Syringomyelia is a chronic disorder involving the spinal cord. When cerebrospinal fluid can't flow properly throughout the spinal cord, a cavity called a syrinx forms. I have a syrinx in my cervical and thoracic spine.

Some things in life are out of our control. I did not choose to have these diseases, Mariah McCarthy did not choose to die, and Valerie Kilmer and Katlin Okrusch did not choose to be on the receiving end of a truck. Their families did not choose the pain and suffering they are going through still.

What we can do is choose how to live with the cards that we are dealt. We have the ability to make good decisions and choices in life. I chose to accept Mariah's Challenge – not because my friends did, but because it is a way to honor her memory and to help take a stand against drinking and driving. I did not drink before this happened and today still keep that promise. I have no problem standing up and stating that I Accept Mariah's Challenge and I do not drink.

I usually have to go to Salt Lake City for hospital stays, but happened to be in the hospital in Butte when that horrific accident occurred. As sick as I was, I can still remember how my heart ached for everyone involved. I knew that day I would never drink and drive - ever. That was an easy choice to make.

I get severe muscle spasms in my neck and back because of the Syringomyelia. I wake up **everyday**, and I'm not kidding you when I say **everyday**, in pain! Someone's bad choice will cause the McCarthy's, Kilmer's and the Okrusch's to have pain forever.

With no cure in site, who knows what the future will bring for me. I will continue to live, love, laugh, and know that if I can get out of bed in the morning and put my feet in the floor, that that day will be a great day! I hope that Mariah's Challenge will continue to do that for people. And, as Winston Churchill states – "Never, never, never give up"!

“How Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life”

Many of your applicants will probably say that Mariah’s Challenge has greatly changed their lives. In reality many people still drink underage. I don’t think it has changed my life but it has definitely given me a wakeup call. My father is an alcoholic and has been my whole life. I went through life thinking it was “normal” to have a father who was drunk. I went through life very closed and put up walls. In fact Mariah and I used to be very good friends. I too put up a wall with her, making us become less of friends just as other people in my life. It is very hard to see a part of your “normal” childhood just vanish as fast as it appeared making Mariah’s Challenge very eye opening. I think Mariah’s Challenge shows the consequences of what can happen when you get in a car when you are under the influence. Although Mariah’s Challenge hasn’t drastically changed my life I think it has changed the lives of many teens in Butte. I am very proud to say I have and probably never will touch alcohol and drugs because I know what it’s like to live with an alcoholic. I am proud to accept Mariah’s Challenge and strongly suggest others to as well.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed me and my life dramatically. Her challenge means being butte tough and saying no to underage drinking, and driving while intoxicated. I have fully accepted her challenge. I have not drunk or used tobacco since her accident. As a freshman and sophomore I faced peer pressure and I drank during those two years of my life. Since the challenge I am proud to say I haven't drunk and I have never used tobacco since the challenge began. Being in high school I see people go to parties and drink and I highly disapprove of it. But I am very willing to these people to have them call me and I give them a ride home to insure that this type of accident that happened to Mariah will never happen again to anyone else. I wish to see that all people in butte will stop living in the past as a mining town and grow up and stop drinking and driving. There family members will have no problem giving them a ride instead of them killing themselves or someone else. Or pay the five dollars for a cab to take them home. I think it is asinine that people will drink and drive and not pay or call for a ride home and that they are willing to take the risk and killing someone else. I was never a believer in drinking and driving. Everyday somebody dies from somebody drinking and driving there is no excuse for drinking in driving in Montana. Especially if one is twenty one Montana started the program called Montana Taverns Association that will pay for cab rides. I believe if someone is that irresponsible to drink and drive they should have to be in jail and lose their drives license for two years.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed my Life

Mariah's Challenge reaffirmed how I have chosen to live my life. It has helped me stick to a path I swore to stay on. I have never been one to go to parties or hang out at the kegs. One can ask around at who was at a party, and my name will never come up. Even before Mariah's challenge I vowed to myself to not give in to substances like drugs or alcohol, this challenge has served to make me even that much more determined. It's been two years since the accident. It was then that I realized that mistakes are made in life, however that is a mistake that can easily be avoided. Now I'm not saying I don't hang out with others, I have many other friends just like me whom for eighteen years have never even touched an alcoholic beverage. I guess if anything Mariah's Challenge has made me make sure that I stay on the right track. It's because of this I vowed too never drink a beer or alcohol of any sort, except for religious purposes of course. It might be a little drastic but there are plenty of others things like Mountain Dew, or even raspberry iced tea, that actually satisfy the thirst and can still allow someone to have a good time. I never want to put my life in danger, and even more important, I wish not to endanger others because of something I do. Because of this challenge I will be able to pass on to future kids the importance of staying away for alcohol and drugs, and try to make a world in which accidents like the one two years ago never have to happen again.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

As a student-athlete, I place the highest value on my health, well-being and performance both in the classroom and on the court. My dedication to my athletic and scholarly endeavors has always deterred me from using and abusing drugs or alcohol. The choice was always a personal one, one that I didn't advertise or discuss much with others; I just simply didn't participate in the commonplace high school out-of-school "activities".

However, in October 2007, when a young beautiful girl was taken needlessly from this world due directly from the abuse of alcohol, I realized how important my rejection of alcohol abuse was. The old adage "Just Say No", I realized, was not just my personal choice, but literally a matter of life or death. Not only was not using drugs and alcohol a necessity for my health and sport's career, but it was not a game, and had real-life, and sometimes terrible, consequences.

With this realization, I have found a new sense of power in my stance against alcohol and drug usage. Since the tragedy that took Mariah's life, not only do I have more confidence in myself to say "no", but also to stand up to my peers about their binge drinking.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship

I'm very appreciative of Mariah's Challenge and the positive impact it has on our community. Before the Challenge celebrating holidays in Butte, such as St. Patrick's Day, meant a choice between either staying at home or participating in unsafe behavior. However, now with the support of the Challenge and organizations that I'm involved in, like Teens Advocating for a Safer Community (TASC), we have given the community fun chemical-free parties to enjoy and celebrate the holidays. It was not always an easy choice to be chemical-free. With everyone participating and pressuring you to join, drinking really did not seem that bad. However, these parties are not what I would define as "fun". Fun, to me, is not falling down everywhere, making regrettable choices, and ultimately possibly endangering yourself or others. Fun should be something you fully remember and can share proudly with others. Fun should not be hazardous or illegal. The Challenge has made me proud to say that I do not drink and I know I am not alone in my choice. My involvement in TASC has helped me to not only enjoy these nights in safe, chemical free environment, but also to help in planning and creating these events for other, especially the younger students coming up. It is great that we are able to show them alternative ways to have fun, that do not involve drinking, and really have the community's support at our events. I was a sophomore when Mariah was killed. It is inspiring to see that out of such a tragic situation, such a positive force came out of the community. It has definitely had impact on me and my actions. Through programs like Mariah's Challenge and TASC, I think it will have a lasting impact on the community for generations to come.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Before Mariah's challenge came about, I didn't think too much about drinking and driving, or even drinking in general. I knew it was something that people did, but I didn't think it affected me at all. I have never been one that likes to go out and party, so I never thought someone who did do these things could endanger me. But then Mariah's tragic accident happened. When I heard about what had happened, I couldn't believe it. Nobody ever expects a tragedy like this to happen. The Butte community is so close that every single person was affected in some way. I soon came to the realization that if a tragedy like this could happen to Mariah and her friends, what's stopping it from happening to me? Suddenly I knew I was not invincible, and that thought, "that will never happen to me" was gone. I finally understood what my parents meant when they'd say, "We trust you, but it's everybody else we worry about".

From then on I knew that alcohol would never be a major part of my life, because it often leads to trouble. I'm completely against drinking and driving. I'm not disappointed to be the DD because I could be saving someone's life, and one person's life is way more important than getting drunk. So, Mariah's challenge has made me a more cautious person who is aware that one person's bad choices can affect me. Now I tell people that if they are planning on drinking just ask for a ride and don't try to be the hero.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has been a great eye opener for the Butte community. It has helped many people, myself included, to realize that we have no guarantees of how our life will turn out. We have one chance to make good choices, choices that will effect ourselves and those around us.

I was excited to see someone make this challenge to us as students. I personally made a decision a long time ago to not get involved with alcohol or drugs, but I have several friends who needed someone to challenge them in this way. It has had a profound effect on several students in the Butte area.

My personal thought on this is that even if only one life is changed or one life is saved, it is worth it all. Choices determine our destiny. If good choices can be made at this time in my life, hopefully I, as an adult, will continue to make these good choices.

Feb. 24, 2010

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this in behalf of Cassandra Larson. I have known Cassy for at least ten years. She is one of the sweetest, kindest young women I have ever had the pleasure to know.

I teach an early morning seminary class and have the pleasure of teaching Cassy. It is early in the morning at 6:30 A.M. every school day. Cassy is always very presentable, and always willing to participate. She adds alot to my classroom; is very likely to add to the discussion as well as she is considerate to others and their opinions. She is a young woman who could go far in education and add alot to the world around her.

Sincerely,

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's challenge has changed my life in many ways. Mariah's challenge showed me how one person's bad choice can change so many peoples' lives. Before Mariah's challenge I didn't realize that one bad choice can cause so much damage.

Since Mariah's challenge started, I helped to try and encourage all of my friends and everyone I know to make the right choices. Before Mariah's challenge, not as many people took drinking and driving as too much of a problem, but now everyone realizes how much of a problem it really is.

I have never gone drinking or done any other kinds of drugs. Before Mariah's challenge started, I didn't drink because I knew how much of a bad decision it is. Many other people that knew didn't understand why I decided not to drink, but now that Mariah's challenge has started more people accept my decision not to drink. During high school, there is a lot of peer pressure put on people to drink, but now that Mariah's challenge has started there is very little peer pressure put on people who choose not to drink.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

What exactly is Mariah’s Challenge? Some people think it means to not drink and drive, others say that it means to not be tempted to use drugs and alcohol. I think that it’s a mixture of both. Living in Butte it just seems natural for teens and adults to be going out and getting drunk, then attempting to drive themselves home. Growing up in this atmosphere makes it seem like there is nothing wrong with this scenario. That idea changed the day I heard the news of a fellow student being killed by a drunk driver. My thoughts on drinking were not always the best, but I always thought, “hey what the heck, it’s high school and everyone drinks at least once in their high school career.”, and thankfully I never did. I never knew Mariah personally, I knew of her, and her sister Jenna, but not as a friend. What I knew of her were the simple things. A nice popular girl that was excited to finally get her first kiss at the coronation dance that sadly never got the chance. Before her time she was taken away from friends and family by a man driving drunk. I met this man once, and it seemed he was no different than I, but his bad decision made him much different than me. He chose to drink and drive like many of his friends and some other people in Butte, and as quickly as that, his life and those of Mariah’s family and friends changed forever. That is what drinking or doing drugs will do to you. They will assist you in making life changing choices. This is how Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life. The Challenge has made me realize the full effects of drugs and alcohol. Even someone like me, someone that is smart and has high values, can waste my life away by doing what is supposedly fun, drinking and driving, or doing drugs. This fad that has been going on for centuries needs to be put to a halt. Not just drinking and driving, but drinking and or doing drugs. I have had eighteen years of leading a clean life with no drugs or alcohol, and I think that I enjoy life more than the people that think they need to get drunk or high to enjoy themselves. Mariah’s Challenge was an awesome challenge for me. I am part of the minority in high school to go out and lead a clean and healthy life. This is a challenge with all the pressure that high school brings. I believe that since I withstood this challenge, I can overcome even harder challenges later in life. Is there really nothing to do in this city we call home? Are doing illegal things the answer? After Mariah’s passing I found a new group of friends. Kids that were once acquaintances who wanted to lead the same life as me. Our weekends consist of something entirely different than “partying” or “raging”. We call our get togethers a gathering. My friends and I plan once a month to invite friends, close and not so close, to each other’s house and order pizza and play video games. At times when I sit at home playing games, reading a book, or watching a movie with my girlfriend, I wonder why other kids think they need to endanger themselves and others by drinking and or doing drugs. My family is a big influence; they have shown me and my sister how alcohol is not the best thing in the world by setting a great example of not drinking. My girlfriend is another big influence for me. It really helps me when the people I am closest to, frown upon the thought of drinking. Mariah’s Challenge has had a great effect on my life, and I know of others who have had similar experiences. Now all we have to do is show people that there is more to life than drugs and alcohol. We need to show the town of Butte what it means to be Butte tough... Butte tough is not to be able to drink and fight. Butte tough means to me, to work together as not just a community, but as a family, and we need to come together and fix this problem. I am proud to have accepted Mariah’s Challenge and to stand up for its values. It’s to be different, to change how life should be lived, to change the tradition of a city deep in tradition, and make a better life for the kids of tomorrow. Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life. Without this challenge there could have been a possible chance of me being that man that took an innocent person from their family and friends.

We are Butte. We were sad October 28, 2009. We are still sad. We have not moved on. We are embracing our mourning. We are strong enough to stand tall, tearlessly. We are brave enough to bend to cry and sad enough to know, we must laugh again.

We are Butte.

We do not understand this tragedy. We know we did nothing to deserve it, but neither does the child living in Africa dying of AIDS, neither do the invisible children walking the night away to avoid being captured by a rouge army, neither does the elephant watching his community be devastated for ivory, neither does the Mexican child looking for fresh water.

No one deserves a tragedy.

We are Butte.

Our community embraces its own and reaches out with open heart and hands to those who open their hearts and minds.

We are strong. And brave. And innocent. And Unafraid. We are better than we think and not quite what we want to be.

We are Butte.

There is a famous French proverb, "tu es ce que tu fais," means "you are what you do." I consider this to be a fundamental truth: I believe that your actions truly reflect upon your true character more so than your words. I believe that saying one thing and doing another is not only hypocritical, but also undermines a person's credibility.

On a personal level, the tragic events which lead to the creation of the Mariah's Challenge program served as a wakeup call—as motivation to become more involved in my community and to elevate my own expectations of myself. I hold myself to a higher moral calling as a result of these tragic events and hope that through my work, another tragedy such as this can be averted.

I am now one of two Presidents of Teens Advocating a Safe Community, a community organization that works closely with Mariah's Challenge to reduce underage drinking and educate the community about its hazards.

I am saddened that the death of Mariah was required to prompt this action on my part. However, I feel that it is now the responsibility of us all to remember and learn from it and to never let something like this happen again.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I've always felt that drinking, especially in teenagers, is a stupid concept; why would anyone want to change who they are as a person, lose control of themselves, and open themselves up to all sorts of dangers, for a few hours of "fun"? Life can be fully enjoyed without alcohol involved.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by giving me the strength to stand up for what I believe in; that teenage drinking is wrong and needs to be stopped. Mariah's Challenge has given me something concrete to stand on, a validation of my feelings about teenage drinking, in a place where I am in the minority. The mindset of the community needs to change, traditions need to be altered, and Mariah's Challenge has added it's voice to mine to help me be heard.

I plan to carry on the message at the University of Montana. I have been accepted into the Davidson Honors College, and have requested to live on the "Chemical-Free" floor of Knowles Hall. There, I will have the advantage of being with others who feel as I do, and together we can add more voices to Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life?

My life was forever changed when I found out about the accident involving Mariah. I put myself in her and her families place and thought about how horrible it must have been to lose your life at such a young age. I also put myself in the drivers place and immediately felt sick to my stomach. After hearing about Mariah, I vowed to never drink and drive. When Mr. McCarthy visited our school, I took Mariah's Challenge. Many of my fellow classmates also took the challenge but have failed to follow through. That day was a very important day in my life. I felt like I was not only saving my life, but possibly saving another persons life.

When I hear stories about people drinking and driving, they are always told like it is something to be laughed at. I overhear people laughing and making fun of the person who slid into a ditch or ran into a fence. I can't stand to hear theses stories because one day they might not be talking about running into a fence, they could be talking about running into a person. They definitely won't be laughing about it when they have to go to a funeral or are behind bars.

Accepting Mariah's challenge opened my eyes to the realities of drinking and driving. Life is a very precious thing and a careless mistake could change the lives of many people forever.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life

My first exposure to Mariah’s Challenge occurred in junior high after the tragedy that took Mariah’s life. My dad explained to me how making a single bad decision can impact the lives of many people. It really made me think about my future. I have since challenged myself to set a pattern of making the right decisions and have goals not only for myself but my peers as well. The work of Mariah’s Challenge has provided a positive direction regarding drinking and driving and convincing people of all ages it should not be tolerated.

After nearly four years of high school, I am amazed at the number of young people who have taken this challenge and are a voice for others. Mariah’s Challenge continues to grow in strength and has become a visible educational tool used to change the mentality and culture of people in the state of Montana. It has not been an easy task, but the fortitude of its founders is unmatched. This grass roots effort has expanded and the support provided by all entities is amazing.

The impact of Mariah’s Challenge can be felt with people of all generations. The culture of drinking and driving can no longer be accepted. I am proud of the great efforts made by Mariah’s Challenge and the community of Butte in being the leaders for change. Mariah’s Challenge continues to provide young people not only educational material regarding right decisions, but true values that can be used for a lifetime. I am proud to have taken the Challenge.

Sincerely,

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The inspiring story of Mariah McCarthy has opened my eyes to the realistic consequences that occur when one drinks and drives. Drinking, partying, and doing the "High School" thing has never appealed to me. My relationship with God and my involvement in Martial Arts has helped me develop a firm foundation of common sense and understanding to not drink. God is my everything, without him I wouldn't be the person I am today. The 15 years of Martial Arts training I have received from George Orcutt has been a true blessing. The discipline and life skills I have received has helped me to learn how to live my life as an example.

God has sheltered me from alcohol and kept me on a path of wisdom and righteousness which is identical to the goals of Mariah's Challenge. When I was very young I made the decision to seriously follow Jesus for a lifetime. The peace and love he fills me with is well-worth the serious dedication required to follow him. God has helped me make it my mission to live as an example to others around me. Drinking and partying is definitely not a part of that equation.

One area in my life God has used is Martial Arts. Class started at the age of three. Since then I have become an instructor at Self Defense USA. The main focus is to lift up confident leaders, all of this has taught me the morals and lessons necessary in living my life as an inspiration, just like Mariah's Challenge.

In closing, Mariah's Challenge is an inspiration to me to continue on the path I'm on. My relationship with God and my Martial Arts background share the same great values associated in this one of a kind Challenge.

Sincerely,

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life by showing me how strong a community can be. Since Mariah’s Challenge was started in 2008, the amount of teenage drinking has significantly gone down. As a high school senior, I’m sure I see and hear of far less of my peers’ drinking than four or five years ago. Butte has been a drinking-oriented community since the days of the miners. Before Mariah’s Challenge, Butte was headed toward out-of-control drinking. It’s sad that this community had to wait for the death of a child from drunk driving to change its ways, but since that happened, I see change coming. I see a community coming together to make a better future for its youth. This community is pushing for stronger youth, a youth that is better than drinking and driving. I see a community that is pushing against underage drinking in general. The prevention tactics are stronger than ever and I believe these tactics will help to change the ways of Butte’s youth. Butte’s youth is stronger than drinking and stronger than making stupid decisions. I’m stronger. I’m Butte Tough. I know how to say “no”. I’m not the only one. I see this community getting stronger by the day as people like my peers and I say no to complying with standards set by this drinking-oriented community. Hopefully this change will catch fire and spread all over Butte and all over Montana.

How Mariah's Challenge had Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in the fact that I need to be more aware of the people on the roads; especially at night because people do not necessarily always put on their lights. Mariah's Challenge has not only changed my life, but it has changed this town's life as a whole. The people used to say "yes drinking and driving is bad but you never get caught," then they just brush it off like no big deal. Now they notice that yes it is a big deal, and we need to do something about it. Because of this accident, during my lifetime, I will never drink and drive, even though I knew of the danger and what it could cause. The accident, I think, put it into retrospect of how much turmoil it could cause to a lot of people. I, myself think that I have a much better perspective on what drinking and driving can really cause. That is why my life is going to be drug and alcohol free.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by making me realize how one choice can change your life. I have chosen to take Mariah's Challenge because in the years since this tragedy happened, I haven't been able to shake the feeling of sadness that I feel every time I see Mariah's picture or listen to her father speak. Because one person chose to drink and then get behind the wheel, a person is gone and a family and community have suffered. So the question for me is, "Do I really want to take that chance?" Is it really that important to me to go out with my friends and drink and maybe drive or get in the car with someone that has been drinking? The answer has always been "no" for me. I don't want to take that chance because the risks are just too great. I have had many experiences in my high school years. I have not missed out on anything because I took Mariah's Challenge. I have played sports. I have gone to dances. I have done activities with my friends. I have made the right choice. Sometimes, one choice can change your life.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways. To begin with, Mariah's Challenge has made me more aware about the dangers involved with drinking and driving. If an individual makes the irresponsible decision to drive while under the influence, they are not only putting themselves in harm's way but also endangering the lives of others. People need to understand that driving is a privilege, not a right. Sometimes I get so discouraged when I read in the newspaper about a person getting their sixth or seventh DUI and not serving any jail time. Montana has to adopt stricter DUI laws and larger fines. It is only a matter of time before that individual hurts themselves, others, or both. Also, I believe that underage drinking is a major problem in Butte. Due to the lack of adolescent activities such as arcades, dollar theater, underage dance clubs, etc., teenagers resort to drinking as an outlet to have fun. I think that Mariah's Challenge has not only affected my life in a positive manner, but has also affected the lives of other teenagers. Sometimes when I am tempted or peer-pressured to drink, I think about Mariah and her father's determination for this tragedy not to happen to any other child and his/her family. My mother has always told my friends and I, if we ever find ourselves in a situation where we have been drinking, to please not drive and she will come pick us up no matter what time. She only wants us to get home safe, and not to hurt anyone else.

Furthermore, I plan on attending Montana Tech next fall majoring in nursing. Ever since I was a little girl, I have always dreamt of becoming a nurse so I can have the opportunity to help and support people during their worse times. I want to make a difference in someone's life, and make a positive contribution to my community. My goal when I become a nurse is to bring hope and comfort to my patients, along with a smile.

How Mariah's Challenge has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has influence many of my decisions about drinking simply because it showed me just how precious life can be. It showed me that any innocent person can lose their life because of someone else making the wrong decision at the wrong time. The night that Mariah lost her life I believe influenced not only me, but many more adolescents and adults in our Butte community to make the right decisions about drinking and driving. A life is much too precious to put in danger over one stupid mistake and alcohol really influences your decisions in a bad way. I don't believe that Wayne Peterson had thought through what could have happened the night Mariah lost her life, but had he made the right decision and simply called someone for a ride, I believe Mariah would still be here. The challenge has made me respect and realize the true influence that both alcohol and the wrong decisions can have on yours and others lives. I never personally knew Mariah, but from the sounds of it she was a very warm hearted and overall amazing girl. She never deserved to lose her life based off of someone else's bad decisions, especially when she was completely innocent in the whole thing. Mariah never deserved what had happened that night, and Kaitlyn and Valerie never deserved to endure what they had to either. Alcohol can change someone's life in an instant, and this is how Mariah's Challenge has influenced my decisions and changed my life.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

To start with, I would like to state that when I was seven years old I had been diagnosed with brain cancers, which called for immediate surgery. For the next two and a half months I went through several radiation and chemotherapy treatments that ended up heightening the sensitivity of my sense of smell. Being in the one of the coffee meccas of the world, Seattle Washington, I soon discovered that due to my heightened sensitivity I could hardly tolerate the smell of coffee, not to mention that I could not go near any person who was smoking or drinking without gagging as soon as the scent hit my nose. As the years past by my tolerance for coffee has improved yet cigarette smoke and alcohol are another story. As to the tragedy of Mariah McCarthy, I cannot describe how sad I felt knowing that the addictive poison of alcohol has claimed another life. This is why I joined Mariah's challenge during the eighth grade, to band together with my fellow students to help end the danger of alcohol, and its ability to destroy the mind. Like many of my friends, I find the true problem is how to persuade kids, teenagers, and adults that alcohol and drugs are not the only way to have fun in life. Our problem now is the party atmosphere in collage life, I know myself that my feelings towards alcohol and any other drug will hold firm.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I will never forget that horrible day in October when the news of her tragic death & injury of her friends was spread about our town. It was hard to believe this was happening; I personally knew these girls and their families and when I think about this terrible tragedy, it did not have to happen. Mariah, who was a year ahead of me at Hillcrest and East, always had a smile on her face. She didn’t deserve this and neither did her family. I, along with my family was very saddened by her death and the affects it had and still does on her family, friends, and community. Her passing and the way it happened was senseless and that is why I accepted Mariah’s Challenge. I took the Challenge and stuck with it during the rest of my junior high and high school days. I will admit it is not easy due to so much peer pressure and trying to fit in, but I knew that I didn’t need to fit in that way. I knew I needed to be me. I decided after this happened to Mariah, Kaitlyn, and Valarie, that I would become a member of TASC (Teens Advocating a Safe Community) and hopefully make a difference in my life and the lives of those who chose this path as well. It was also a hope of mine to change the minds of some of those peers that were making the wrong choices and I feel like my proactive approach may have done that. Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life for the better and as I graduate high school I know I have the confidence and knowledge to make the right choices for me and hopefully influence those around me.

Thank you for your consideration,

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge affected me indirectly, but it taught me at a young age that the consequences of my actions affect not only me but everyone around me, whether I know them or not.

When Mariah's tragedy happened I was thirteen years old, a time when kids start experimenting with various substances trying to be grown up and have fun. Going to Central, however, you never really did the "bad things" that we heard the kids in public schools were doing. When Leo McCarthy and Mariah's friends, some of which went to central themselves, came to talk to us about what had happened, it really struck a chord in me. I never, in my fishbowl point of view, had thought that this could happen in my town and to someone so close to my age. It made me realize that even the smallest decisions I make on a daily basis can have huge consequences and could alter someone else's life irrevocably. This knowledge was especially important when I went onto high school, at Butte High, where peer-pressure to be "cool" and have friends weighs on your head like a cinderblock. Mariah's Challenge taught me that you don't need to party or to have friends who party to be cool and that realization gave me such a strong sense of who I am and what I believed in, and this allowed me the freedom to pursue various extra-curricular activities. It's a sad situation to have happened, however, my inner-core values are stronger than they would have been otherwise. With this inner-strength, I am confident about going to college where I'll be faced with the same peer-pressures, if not

more. I thank the Mariah's Challenge organization because they gave me strength to move off of the traditional Butte High School path and hopefully leave a brighter path for future students to follow. I hope I made a difference.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

The amount of drinking and driving that happens across the United States and even Montana is catastrophic. Too many people do not realize the consequences of their actions. That is why when Mariah's Challenge first came out in the Butte community it sincerely made me observe my own actions. The Mariah's Challenge has changed my life by making Butte a safer place to live by addressing the amount of drunk driving that happens. Especially as a teen, there are challenges of peer pressure to go party and get drunk which many kids find hard to resist. Mariah's Challenge has acted as a stepping stone for many of my peers to make right decisions. It has challenged me to never make the decision of drinking under age and especially not to get behind the wheel of a vehicle while intoxicated. I have seen the impact that Mariah's Challenge has made in my school because many teens have begun to understand how alcohol can affect the body. Now, they are educated about the decisions they are making and will be more likely to make the right one. In so many ways the dynamics of Butte have changed because of Mariah's Challenge and it has played a huge part in my life by keeping my community safer and helping me understand more and more the devastating consequences of drunk driving.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life in multiple ways. I believe that since Mariah’s Challenge came, my life so far has changed in many positive and negative ways, but has been meaningful and exciting. From my freshman year, to now my senior year of high school, I have learned who I truly am because of Mariah’s Challenge. I have also learned who my true friends are, and how to distinguish honest people from a crowd. I’m definitely a leader, not a follower and I don’t look down on others. I would classify myself as a team leader. My high school experience so far has been filled with stressful moments and peaceful moments, but I look back with no regrets. I try to look at the positive sides of things and not the negatives. I show a lot of motivation and cooperation to things I want to achieve in life, which makes me feel that I am a very responsible and goal driven individual. I have learned to regard every life experience as if I have nothing to lose and so much to gain through the experience itself. I have learned to stand by my beliefs and to fight for what is right for me to accomplish my dreams.

Lastly, Mariah’s Challenge made me take some pride in my community. There is not one free spay a neuter clinic, for low income patrons, you wouldn’t see me at. I help recover dogs and cats after they have been fixed because I have so much love for animals. I also help The Butte YMCA with many tasks; my favorite being teaching young kids how to swim. Softball is my life, and I am one of a couple stand outs on my team. I have lettered two years now and will be soon lettering my third time this year. As a team leader I encourage everyone on my team to stay substance free and come to my house on St. Patrick’s Day for a substance free party. Also, I help out Mile High Little League Softball and Baseball clean up their fields during the summer.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life Essay

The terrible shock of Mariah's death was felt by everyone in my family. We drove by the scene and couldn't believe it happened.

I've taken the Mariah's Challenge. I won't drink as an underage minor. I won't drink and drive. I won't ride with another person who has been drinking. I won't abuse illegal drugs. Drinking and driving is wrong and my parents have taught me this for years. My parents do not drink and we don't have alcohol in our home.

Butte has been known as a party town for over 100 years – hard working, hard playing, and hard drinking. My mom was told that before she came to school at Montana Tech and her family tried to discourage her from going to college in Butte because of this attitude. Partying and underage drinking have been accepted for years in Butte.

Mariah's Challenge is beginning to change that attitude. It's easier to say no to a beer or to hang out at a fire. It's easier to say no to going to a party where alcohol may be served. Even the swim team has a non-alcohol policy that includes not attending any activity where alcohol may be served and you could get kicked off the team if pictures of you drinking were posted on Facebook. I was unable to attend a bridal shower for my hairdresser this spring because it was held at a local hotel and champagne might be served.

I am a member of the youth group at the Assembly of God Church. This church connection also makes it easy to say no to drinking and drugs.

Taking the Mariah's Challenge has been a positive influence in my life. I will continue to work to promote these positive changes as a result of Mariah's Challenge.

How Mariachi's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariachi's Challenge has changed my life by helping me not drink before I'm twenty-one. It also helped me to realize when I'm old enough to drink I must drink responsibly. Also, when I'm with my friends to not let them drink and drive.

Sincerely,

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Sometimes it is okay to be a follower. Several years ago I decided to follow my brother's example and accept Mariah's Challenge. I was in junior high when I first noticed his commitment to the Challenge. I respect and admire my brother because he stayed focused on his schoolwork and soccer. Recently, I saw his pain as he talked about visiting a former soccer teammate who survived, but with devastating brain trauma, a drinking and driving accident.

So I will follow his example. Mariah's Challenge has helped me to believe that to achieve my greatest potential I must remain strong in my conviction to avoid drinking and any other momentary decision that could compromise my future. Because of this decision, my college and career plans are clear and focused. They are not fogged by a confused or altered mental state.

This decision has not come easy. The peer pressure to drink and smoke in high school is very strong and hard to avoid. I may have missed out on some fun times. I may have let some friendships slip away. But in the end, I have a strong and healthy mind and body. I have a bright future. I have self-confidence and self-respect.

Sometimes teammates, classmates, or random people you don't even know, notice the actions and decisions you make. I like to believe that I have set a positive example for others to follow, like the one my brother set for me. Mariah's Challenge has allowed me to be the best that I can be. It has allowed me to achieve my greatest potential.

March 1, 2012

Mariah's Challenge
Board of Directors
PO Box 2123
Butte, MT 59701

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Through Mariah's Challenge, I have seen many students meet and come up short to the expectations set forth by the Mariah's Challenge Board of Directors. However, the ones that, not only meet the bottom-line requirements, but do much more are really the ones who are spectacular people. These people are most likely going to engage in more beneficial activities. Such actions include advocating for others, not just themselves, to restrain from alcohol and drugs or bad grades, or something as unnoticeable as refusing to be around their peers who engage in those very activities. These students very rarely get rewarded for abstaining from this negative conduct. Such people are the ones who deserve to be reminded that they are, in fact, doing something special, something out of the ordinary. The scholarship offered through your organization, Mariah's Challenge, is that 'something special.' Mariah's Challenge encourages teens to, not only accept a simple challenge, but to embrace a lifestyle that is not clouded by alcohol or drugs. So that a simple teen can "do the right thing," and finally get rewarded for it. And they shall be rewarded for no other reason than they deserve it.

My whole life, I was willing to restrain from this conduct because I wanted to prove to no one other than myself, that I am one to not follow the crowd. Without Mariah's Challenge, I would still uphold the principles of your organization because they are important to me. But with it, it becomes an opportunity to remind me why these values are important. And for that reason, my life has been changed because these kids, and myself, that deserve something special, but finally receive it.

Sincerely,

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When I was an incoming freshman to Butte High, I did not have many friends. I learned that going to a new school, especially the transfer from junior high to high school, was extremely difficult. I was stressed, and I pushed away many who tried to help me. I even considered turning to drugs and alcohol. I knew people who drank, partied, and did drugs, seemingly without any repercussions. Then I learned of Mariah's Challenge.

After hearing about Mariah's Challenge, I knew I could never and would never do drugs or drink underage or while driving. I realized that underage drinking and driving while under the influence of alcohol *did* have consequences. Extreme consequences. Internally, I vowed to accept the Challenge. Instead of turning to drugs and alcohol, I became involved in extracurricular activities and volunteering. Mariah's Challenge prevented me from going to a dark place that is hard to come back from.

I no longer allowed myself to be surrounded by people who drank while underage or who used drugs. Instead of avoiding the problem and pretending I did not hear when others discussed their "wild parties" in class, I told them of Mariah's Challenge and the devastating events that can occur in such situations. Because of Mariah's Challenge, I have not touched alcohol or any illegal drugs at all. Mariah's Challenge changed me from a teenager tolerant of drug and alcohol abuse into a productive young adult trying to better my community. If it were not for Mariah's Challenge, it is likely that I would not be graduating this May nor attending college this fall. Mariah's Challenge helped me to realize that drug and alcohol abuse are not acceptable, and truly helped me become a better person.

Mariah's Challenge has not changed my life. That could be the worst possible sentence for me to start out this essay. However, I think my honesty works when I proudly say that I do not do drugs or drink. My parents raised me with the motto, "Do what you please, but you will deal with the consequences of your actions." Though that's a recipe for disaster with most teenagers, knowing that I wasn't going to be bailed out of anything helped me push myself to success. I was lucky that the idea of drugs never appealed to me. I don't understand the point of lighting something on fire to inhale the smoke or drinking something that tastes like it smells: disgusting. The subject was never taboo in my household, thus never igniting a rebellious curiosity, but it certainly wasn't encouraged. I only wish more of Butte's youth were raised this way.

It's truly heartbreaking to watch my classmates enter rehab, even more heartbreaking to watch them refuse the help they need. To Butte, it's a game. Who can come up with the best answer to, "So guess what happened to me last night?" Who's the newest person to get their green card, and what excuse did they use? I've been around drugs, and I've always declined, but my friends have ceased to use them around me. One step at a time, as they say. Maybe I should staple a picture of my face to their forehead to ensure constant sobriety? I know they resist out of respect, but I hope one day that respect will become understanding. There's a whole world out there. Why limit yourself to a bottle?

The Challenge didn't change my choices, it strengthened them. It's the first step to a cleaner future for Butte, and it has inspired me knowing there are more people striving to make a difference.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

The day I heard the news that a drunk driver one evening hit three teenage girls killing one of them, I was devastated. Those girls were only one school year ahead of me, all close to my age; a very frightening thought. The thought that continuously ran through my head was, "What if that could have been me?" or "What if that had been one of my best friends?" It's so tragic to think things like that happen today and will probably continue to happen.

To prevent similar tragic events happening to me or someone I know I have accepted Mariah's Challenge and have stayed true to it. Mariah's Challenge has moved me to stay a clean respectful person free of any alcohol and has moved me to be proud of my choices. I am be proud of the person that I am today. I look at my fellow peers, who in the past have had an MIP or had issues with drinking, I think to myself "I am so happy to be who I am and make the right decisions." I believe drinking is wrong and dangerous, leading to many accidents like the death of young Mariah. I am hoping the horrible, tragic events of this world will slowly decrease and by making sure that this happens I have challenged myself with Mariah's challenge. I believe Mariah's challenge has been a great opportunity to influence young people, to help them want to live a healthy alcohol-free life. I am proud to say I am eligible for this scholarship; I am proud to say I will be continuing to live a happy, healthy life free of any substance abuse or alcohol.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

How Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life, it has affected my life in many ways. For such a thing to happen in such a tight community where drinking is a big problem, it really makes you think, is it worth it? When I hear of my peers and even some of my friends after they get an MIP, they are disappointed in themselves and in their choices. Butte isn’t the most enjoyable town with a lot to do, but it is very close. When tragedies such as this one occur everyone is touched by it, and especially when such a nice young woman’s life is the conclusion of the accident. This challenge has changed my life, I have went through my high school career without a minor in possession and feel I would be a great choice for this scholarship.

"How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life"

I remember it just as if it happened yesterday! October 28, 2007, I was in the eighth grade at the time. I remember hearing the name and thinking to myself I know those girls. I knew who Mariah was because I played traveling volleyball in the same club as her. She was an amazing girl, and definitely shouldn't have her life taken by someone who made the irresponsible choices.

I remember accepting Mariah's challenge as soon as it came out. I strongly disagree with drinking first off, but I really discourage driving under the influence! In fact, I will always be willing to give anyone a ride no matter what time of the night it is if they are drinking. They can not only kill themselves, but they can kill an innocent person such as Mariah. This was a sad time for Butte. We lost an amazing girl that would light up the room if she was in it. I remember watching all of the news, the basketball half times, buying all of the t-shirts to be a Mariah's Messenger, buying the bracelets, everything I remember it all. It was such a tragedy to Butte that I especially remember the date it happened, and every October 28th I wore a Mariah's Messenger shirt in remembrance of her.

Mariah's Challenge is such a wonderful thing that you guys have created for this community. I want to thank you so much for everything you have done over the years! You guys opened your heart to let the community of Butte help you with the loss of/injuries of your daughters. You not only did that, but you have created wonderful goals that kids set for themselves by accepting Mariah's Challenge. I proudly accept Mariah's Challenge!!!



You don't know what you have till it is gone

Alcohol is a simple seven letter word. The word has multiple meanings and uses. Although one thing they don't put in the dictionary is how this substance change your life in a split second. Do these books mention the dangers or the warning signs of this substance? This was the question I asked my dad as a young child, because even at five years old I never thought a word such as alcohol would have such a huge impact on my life. That was until one late September night that changed everything. This was the night that my mom got into a drunken driving accident.

First, I should give you a little background on the incident. My parents for the past few months prior to what happened had been a little rocky. They always seemed to be arguing about everything that was brought, even the littlest things. That was the reason why my mother was going to spend a week with her friend Jo Anna in Utah, but at this time I did not understand why she was leaving. I remember her saying she needed to clear her head and set some things straight. My mom called my brother, sister, and me every day to tell us what she was doing, how much fun she was having, and that she missed us dearly. She also promised presents when she came back and so soon enough she was home again. So as soon as I knew it she was home with many presents even the pink slug bug Barbie car I had been begging for quite some time now. My parents then brought me upstairs for bed and I thought to myself it was one of the best days of my life. When I was falling asleep I was thinking that day was done my mom was home we all got presents and all was well, little did I know that my mom's night was just starting.

The next day, Saturday, started out like any other except it wasn't my dad was at the table drinking a cup of coffee it was my grandpa. Well, he went on to make me breakfast and I watch my annual weekend cartoons. Finally after finished I went to go see why my mom wasn't up, she always slept in late but never this late. I went into her room and I couldn't find her which I thought was oddly weird, that never happens and especially since she had just got home the night before from a long trip. Then I went in the kitchen and slumped down in the chair to think about what was going on. Just then my dad walked in, he looked exhausted and frazzled and I knew something was terribly wrong by the look on his face and just then he told me to go my brother and sister. My mind was going crazy wondering about all the possible scenarios, and that is finally when all three of us sat down at the table. We all were bright eyed and sleepy from the night before, my dad then went on to tell us that our mom had went out the bar after her and my dad got into fight. She had consumed too much alcohol and got into her truck and tried to drive home, but on her way home she ran into a house and killed a man. At this point panic was running through my whole body I was scared of my own mom and let me tell you there is nothing worse than that feeling. My dad told us to get packed that we would be staying at our aunt's house for the day. All I could think of is how my world was falling apart piece by piece and how I need to get away from everyone.

The next couple months a lot of things happened and my life changed forever. I never thought people would treat me differently, but they did. For instance, I had just started the first grade and I asked a girl if she like to swing on the swing set. She said she couldn't hang out with me because my mom had killed someone and her mom said I was a bad person because I was related to her. I couldn't understand what I had done

wrong; all I can remember is walking home crying because I knew my mom was a good person. I can even remember people walked around me like I had a bad disease, it was like if they got to close something bad would happen to them. Teachers, my friend's parents, and people who cared about us always called to check on my family and me and see how we were doing. People walked around us like they were walking on eggshells or they would whisper behind your back like a bad episode of gossip girl. It took a long time to figure out why people had treated my family this way, especially my mom that now I understand now.

At this point is when I made vow to myself, to not let anything or anyone get in my way of who I am. People will always talk and mistakes will be made, but the difference is I will not let these things define me. I learned a valuable lesson about alcohol that drinking and driving that day. I learned accidents do happen to people and it can happen to anyone, even me. Although, I know many of you may not care about my story I just hope you take one second to stop and listen. You never know maybe you can save someone's life; it may even be your own. Also, I'd like to thank my mom because even though a lot of bad has came out of this situation but also some good has to. I am extremely proud of my mom she completely turned her life around and has been sober of ten years now. I hope all of you on day have an experience that changes your life for the better just like this one has for me. This is the reason why I Sarie Marie Nicholls have accepted Mariah's Challenge over four years ago and will continue to lead in these footsteps.

How *Mariah's Challenge* Changed My Life

I was in seventh grade when Mariah passed, a year younger than she was herself. A silly *Myspace* bulletin was hastily posted merely an hour after the accident listing the three names of the girls that had been involved. No one really knew what had happened, or why, or how; all we knew was that a drunk driver had made a mistake that would alter the course of those young girls' lives and our own forever.

Never have I really indulged in the so called thrill of alcohol consumption. Most of my family, wonderful people that they are, have gone through (or currently are going through) a serious alcoholic state. Seeing so much struggle and pain in the people I care about steered my path away from the social drinking lifestyle so popular among teenagers.

Even more of a deterrent was the multiple drunken car wrecks I've witnessed within my short life. Rollovers, suicide attempts, and deaths; it's a slap of reality and further hurt every time it happens. When Mariah, Valerie, and Kaitlyn fell victim to a drunk driving accident, it was all the more reason to stay sober. Losing Mariah, seeing those girls' families and friends in such a state of grief and fear made me realize how much one person can really mean to someone else. The thought of doing that to my loved ones, or to someone else's, makes my stomach drop and my throat clench.

Those girls went through Hell and torment unimaginable to most; but something good came out of it all. Awareness. Never has our community of Butte, America, taken notice that we have a problem. Alcohol has been taken too lightly. Perhaps we are a

humble town of drinking Irish folk, but it took the death of a young girl for us to recognize the commonness of drunken driving right in our hometown, and how dangerous it really can be.

That awareness was truly awoken in me when I read the news the morning following the accident. *Mariah's Challenge*, though sparked by tragedy, proved my choice to be sober the best thing I could do for my future. There couldn't be a truer message.

Typed on February 21, 2012

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When this tragic event occurred, I was starting 8th grade at the time. It was the morning when I read the newspaper and saw the article about a drinking and driving accident involving three girls. When I found out who passed away, my jaw dropped. I didn't know Mariah personally, but I knew her well enough to actually tear up a bit. This tragic event outraged a city and a family; but as people say, we're Butte tough. This was an event that we have to ask ourselves "how could we have stopped this?" In comes the father of Mariah at a Butte High basketball game to announce the beginning of Mariah's Challenge, a program to stop drunk driving and under-age drinking. Here we are now, 5 years later and still going strong.

My life has changed drastically throughout the years. As a senior in high school, I hear a lot of kids talk about drinking and how much they drank that weekend. I have never taken a sip of alcohol in my life, never have I done illegal drugs in my life, and never WILL I do any of that stuff in my lifetime. Thanks to Mariah's Challenge, my family feels safer about driving at night time. The classic stereotype for people who live outside of the state of Montana thinks we're just a bunch of hicks who drink and drive. Well they truly don't understand that we are a state that bonds together as one and tries to stop this illegal act. Ever since Mariah's Challenge has been in effect, the cases of DUI's has gone down drastically.... The only problems we have now are the people who try to text and drive simultaneously.

In conclusion, I am in full support of the Mariah's Challenge and hope it continues and gets stronger.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in more than one way. The most dramatic way is the following. I remember Mariah as being the "nice eighth grader," when I was a seventh grader. The day I found out she had passed away, after briefly knowing her; I made a promise to myself. The promise was that I would be remembered by many, as I remember her; the girl that didn't judge a book by its cover and didn't talk down to underclassmen. It was a process that took a few years, but now I can say that I have fulfilled and kept that promise to myself. I have made many friends because of this, and I have lost many too. Being the girl that is nice to the underclassmen is not always a good thing, according to my fellow classmates. I've never been one to follow the crowd though. In my opinion being a leader is a great quality to have, and one of the reason's I am one is because of taking Mariah's Challenge.

Another way that Mariah's Challenge has changed my life was by taking the pledge to not drink and drive. I will not be hypocritical and say that I have never done so in my past, but I will say that I never will again. I almost lost my best friend about a year ago to drinking and driving. When those things happen, it changes your outlook on many things. I have many friends and family that do drink and drive and every second that they drive while under the influence it makes you worry. I don't want the people I love to have to live their life worrying about me. So I choose to not drink and drive.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

 Mariah's challenge has had a huge impact on my life; seeing that class go through that much pain was horrifying for me to watch, as my brother was a member of that class. I am always really nervous about my friends drinking and driving or even drinking for that matter. I know that kids will be kids and have parties and go out and drink and most of them drive themselves home after those parties, which puts everyone in danger. I have had a few incidents in my family with my family members having friends that get into accidents because of alcohol. I have also had some friends get into accidents and have to go to the hospital because of alcohol, which is a scary position for anyone. When all it takes is for you to not drink and from experience you do not need to drink to have a good time. My friends and I go out and have a ton of fun without the consumption of alcohol. I also have those few friends that go out and drink and go to parties and I don't understand why they do it and put themselves in that position. I always give my friends the option that if they do go out and drink to call me to come get them so that I know they made it home safely. The idea of teenagers out drinking scares me just because most teenagers don't make the right choices when they are sober let alone under the influence. I wouldn't want to put anyone in that situation but I am only one teenager. I can't make decisions for other people but my choice is to be alcohol free.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Growing up in a community that is as tight-knit as Butte is, when a tragedy strikes everyone is affected. When Mariah was killed, I was an eighth grader and didn't really understand what had happened, but I had seen the damage that it had caused to the community. My neighbor was in the ninth grade with Mariah and was crushed by what happened. She was good friends with Mariah and I saw how devastated she was. She told me everything that had gone on and helped me understand. I vowed after that day not to cause the same type of pain to someone else like what had happened to her and the rest of the community. From that point on, I did not want to drink and have yet to this day had any alcohol. This is a very rare thing for a high school student to say. Now that I am a senior I have seen enough drinking during my high school years to see the problems that it causes. I am glad that Mariah's Challenge has forced some students to take a look at what drinking can do to a community. Mariah will always be in our hearts and hopefully Mariah's Challenge will change many more lives than just mine in its lifetime.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

When I accepted Mariah's Challenge in April of 2008, I couldn't begin to fathom the impact it would have on me and those around me. I had always promised myself that drugs and alcohol would never be a part of my life, whether it was legal for me to do so or not. But growing up, I always felt that I was standing alone. After Mariah's tragic death, the creation of Mariah's Challenge was a testament to me that I was not alone. There were people fighting the personal battle against underage drinking and were ready to take a stand against drinking and driving.

But one of the most important things that changed my life were the examples that Valarie Kilmer and Kaitlyn Okrusch set for those around them. They displayed the type of person I wanted to be.

I had the opportunity to have a math class my freshman year with Valarie and her attitude was amazing. She was happy and friendly to everyone around her. She made my freshman year so much easier. Kaitlyn also holds a special place in my heart. During Speech, she took me under her wing, always having my back while taking care of the team, constantly being a friend and showing happiness.

Though I was not given the precious opportunity to meet Mariah, I believe her spirit lives through the examples of these two amazing girls. This challenge has made me more courageous, to stand for what is right because you will never be alone. I truly am grateful for this Challenge and the change it provoked in me, to set the example to those around me that underage drinking is wrong, drinking and driving is a crime, and to live a responsible life making sure that something like this never happens again.

HOW MARIAH'S CHALLENGE CHANGED MY LIFE

Mariah's challenge changed my life and all the residents of Butte, Montana in a blink of an eye. Not only did this stupid mistake take the life of an innocent girl, it also devastated her family and friends. The man's life also will never be the same as it will not be for his family either. Both parties involved will never be the same. I am proud to be a member of the Butte community because they always seem to come together in tough times and make a positive out of a negative.

I have always chosen not to drink and Mariah's challenge helped me stay true to this. As a high school student in Butte, there is not a lot of things for us to do and I know that is why a lot of the kids drink. I have kept myself busy with things I love to do. I was a member of the golf team, played intramural basketball, a member of the National Honor Society and part of the Talent Search. I have also worked 30 plus hours a week since I was a freshman. In my spare time I love to hunt, fish, and camp with my family and friends. I know all of these things keep me out trouble. I have never fallen into the pure pressure and I thank my family for that.

I personally feel that drinking is stupid and a waste of money. Why would anyone want to go get so drunk they can't walk and the next day they can't see because their head hurts so badly? Then you have the people who think they can drive even when they can't walk. I understand that drinking is a part of life and in Butte it seems like there is a lot more of it. We have a bar just about on every corner. Some people blame the Irish tradition but I think it is all in everyone's head and we as adults should know right from wrong.

I believe that the challenge has helped the Butte community and I thank all that is involved for all you have done. I know that it is always in the back of my head and I would never want my family to go through what either family has been through because of this tragedy. For the sake of the kids in Butte I really hope that they keep enforcing the MIP's and reminding all of them of the damage it does to everyone involved.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Many of us in America love to be snoopers when it comes to our relatives. I can vividly remember the day that Mariah died and the pain it brought to my brother because I had his cell phone on hand when he received the text message that one of his childhood friends had passed away. My family and I moved to Butte when my brother Ethan was in third grade. He had Mariah in several of his classes in grade school and throughout middle school.

It was October 28, 2007 and we were at Great Falls High for a swim meet that my brother was competing in. He had just left for a race and left his cell phone on the ground by me. I saw that he got a text message from a friend alerting him of Mariah's death. I instantly went to my parents to alert them to what had happened, and they were the ones that informed Ethan of what was going on. I saw the pain on his face to the news that he had lost a classmate.

If I could, I would prevent everyone in the world from that sort of pain. Mariah's Challenge has changed my life because it raises awareness to the pain that drinking can bring to people. It literally can tear families apart. Mariah's Challenge has made me want to be a better person and avoid the use of alcohol so that I can avoid bringing the type of pain I saw that day on my brother's face. For me, Mariah's Challenge has provided me with a way to help myself, within my family and community, obtain the goal of preventing the pain brought on by drinking.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in an number of way . Since May 19, 2010 when I accepted Mariah's challenge . I have become more active member in the Butte Silverbow community just this fall I drove the S-125 genie boom lift up the continental divide to paint the Lady of the Rockies and also painted the Lady from the waist down . I Jason Simon promised to myself and the community that I would not drink till I am of age and I have upheld my promise till this day and I will continue till I am of age and never to drink and drive when I am of age to drink. I also help with any Maintenance on the Lady of the Rockies and their pasty sale during the school year and work the folk festivals during the summer. I have lost one of my best friends Cullan Berry and now I know how frail life is and how we have to do anything to protect it. My family and I are working on a project that will benefit the whole town and intern the whole state of Montana. we have been working on this project for the last 10 years . We need to get these kids off the streets. the only reason why kids start drinking is because there is nothing to do in this town and this project will eliminate a majority of teenagers drinking just to have fun. I hope soon that we will be able to join forces and stop teenage drinking once and for all.

thank You,

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I never personally knew Mariah McCarthy, but I do remember the day when the tragic events happened on October 28, 2001 that took her life due to an under-aged driver who had been drinking. There was a swarm of text messages that flooded most young teenagers’ cell phones living in our community that announced the tragic loss of Mariah. I remember thinking to myself how horrible this would be if it happened to me or anyone that I loved. For the next several weeks that was much sorrow in Butte and many unanswered questions of how this horrific event could happen in a community like ours. Mariah’s family started a campaign to memorialize her life by challenging teenagers and young adults to refrain from drinking underage. I took this challenge personally and vowed to never drink underage and to never drive under the influence of alcohol at any age.

Living in Butte all my life I have seen the use of alcohol be abused in people’s lives of all ages. The peer pressure of being a teenager in a community where drinking has been so prevalent in the past has been a challenge in and of itself. But I whole heartedly believe that Mariah’s Challenge has caused me and my friends to think about the consequences of actions and that life can change so quickly based on these actions. Mariah’s Challenge has made me a better person, has caused me to be thankful for what I do have, and thought me to not take the gift of life for granted. Thank you, Mariah’s Challenge, for changing my life.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Drunk driving has claimed so many lives. I find it odd that something so preventable occurs all the time and reaps such catastrophe and loss. Mariah's Challenge is a program that encourages citizens to be responsible for their lives and the lives of others, by discouraging drunk driving.

Mariah's Challenge was created after the death of Mariah McCarthy and the injuries sustained by her two friends, Valarie Kilmer and Kaitlyn Okrusch. While I never knew Mariah, I have known Valarie for approximately ten years. The havoc wreaked by Mariah's death has extended to me because of my friendship with Valarie. It was difficult for me, as Valarie's friend, to know that she was experiencing such pain and hardship through the death of Mariah.

Not only was my friend Valarie injured by a drunk driver and her friend killed, but drunk driving has affected me in a more personal way. I never met my grandmother, because when my father was sixteen, my grandmother was killed by a drunk driver three days before Christmas. It is an odd concept to grasp, that I have never met my own grandmother because of one person's choice to drink and drive.

I have felt the reverberations of drunk driving, but consider how many more stories there are, of pain and disaster caused by intoxicated drivers. Entire towns are affected by drunk drivers, as the case has been with Mariah McCarthy. While I had never met Mariah, she was one year older than I, and the truth of her death struck me personally.

Mariah's Challenge was born out of the McCarthy family's tragedy and loss. It is a regretful way for a beneficial program to be born, but it has encouraged an awareness for drunk driving, and actively worked toward cutting down on the number of drunk drivers.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life on how I act around others. I know when to say no. Saying no to alcohol and drugs makes me feel good about myself. As teenagers we can have fun without that by doing fun things with friends such as going bowling or going to a movie. When people think they are much better than others just because they go out and party all the time. They don’t think about what they are doing and what could happen to them. When I see all these students in the newspaper because of a MIP it makes me think, why are people doing this to their lives. It doesn’t make them any cooler. I did TIP my eighth grade year and enjoyed being part of it. I also knew Mariah and knowing that this happened to her means it can happen to anyone. Now that I am a senior I realize that no matter how many of my peers are partying every weekend. That doesn’t make who I am. I always say no because I know what will happen. My parents have helped me with good decision makings. My mother has told me stories of people she knew that got hit by a drunk driver in car accidents and what it did to the families. It is the hardest to overcome and by that one time of doing something stupid it could cause you to lose your life or someone else’s. That is something no one should ever have to face if we just make the right choices and teenagers and adults. I love art, it is my passion. I want to go onto college to continue my education in art education. I want to continue making the right choices so that I can further my education into getting my career started. I want to continue being a good role model for others and look up to others that are good role models for me.

“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”

I was attending East Middle School when Mariah’s tragic accident occurred. I simply remember walking into my first period English class to find my teacher crying her eyes out. After I was informed of the unfortunate event, I had a hard time wrapping my young and naive head around the fact that someone would actually hit someone with one’s car and then drive off leaving the three girls helpless.

Even though the events that night were caused by someone making the inadequate decision to drink and drive, the consequences of drinking didn’t become real to me until one year later. My brother, Brady, while attending the University of Montana in Missoula, suffered the consequences of someone drinking and he almost got killed from it. My brother was at a house party in Missoula and he was attacked by someone with a knife. The attacker, after stabbing my brother almost to death, drove away and then proceeded to break into a house two blocks away. My brother was stabbed numerous times. The doctors didn’t even know how many times. Brady almost lost use of his arm. Brady was stabbed in the chest and his stomach was cut wide open. This resulted in a lifetime of pain and scars and reoccurring dreams of that night’s event which will never go away.

After seeing my brother lying half alive in a hospital bed, I realized that nothing productive could come from drinking. Alcohol could only bring one pain, discomfort, depression and death. After seeing the consequences of drinking face to face, I swore to myself that I would never pick up that bottle of promising despair, and I still refuse to now.

I realized how Mariah’s Challenge has helped me, my family and my friends. I am very sorry for your pain. I hope change becomes a reality for many people.

I wanted to thank Leo McCarthy, Jimm Kilmer and Chad Okrusch for giving me the opportunity to apply for this scholarship.

I am accepted to Montana Tech and want to become a Mechanical Engineer. I want to design engines for one of the three automakers. This scholarship will help be achieve my goals and dreams.

I am from Deer Lodge Montana. I would like to say why Mariah's Challenge means anything to me and how it even got some one like me to listen. I didn't know her or anything about her until her father told her story and changed my thoughts on "fun."

At first, I saw the signs tee-shirts and bracelets but I would think well this happens every day to so many people what makes her different? I thought how can you judge and have such strong hate for a young person who just made one bad mistake. In my mind he just got drunk and messed up once, just like most of the youth these days, myself, and my friends. I agreed with the stop drinking and driving, but I never made an effort to change. I let my friends drive wasted just so we could go get a candy bar or drive in the mountains to watch the sunrise or sit by a fire.

While we were at Birch Creek Center, they told us we had a presentation. When we got there it was some 'thing' on Mariah's Challenge. Little did I know that this would be the presentation that would help direct me in the right path.

I heard Leo, Mariah's father, speak in such a way I had to listen. He had such knowledge on the subject and he had such emotion; but what captured me, is that instead of dwelling on the past, he was thriving for the future. It

seems like he knows he can not change the past, but he keeps trying to get the word out to change the future.

His emotions were so strong, but not for the sorrow of his tragedy, but so other people knew that driving drunk hurts more people than you think. Leo was very passionate about saving other people from this pain and emptiness.

I pulled Leo aside at the end of the story and asked how he could judge that one mistake. He then told me the most important fact I think I will ever hear. "For every one DUI a person gets they have driven drunk 250 times before and have gotten away with it."

Looking back on my life before, my friends and I could have killed someone or our selves, and all for a simple candy bar. I am so glad that Mariah's father has opened a new door for me and filled me with new knowledge that will keep me safe along with other people and stay with me my whole life.

I have decided that I will help with the war against drunk driving. Hopefully less drunk driving accidents will happen, and no one will have to go thru such a terrible pain. This story has touched my heart and I hope it will touch many more.

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

Why have I choose not to drink during my high school career? Why did I chose not to do any sorts of drugs? Why did I except Mariah's Challenge? I remember hearing the tragic news of Mariah's death and asking God why did this happen?

As I approached high school I remember seeing and hearing about alcohol and drugs every single day. I took a second to think, "Is that what I want for my life?" I soon learned the answer to my question, no!

As a senior, I hear about all the traumatic events that went on. I couldn't even count how many times I've heard my peers say, "I'm never drinking again!" Yet that next weekend they are out once again.

I hate the feeling of waking up every Saturday morning, having countless text messages about how one of my friends were in an accident, or even very hurt. I've lately been the driver. I pick up friends and bring them to their destination safely. I'm hoping one day my positive behavior will wear off on my peers.

Instead of drinking, I do many other various activities. I have a fun time and that is a hundred percent sober.

Mariah's Challenge has showed me I'm not in it alone. Just because I'm not drinking doesn't mean I'm an outcast. I thank Mariah's Challenge for helping me through high

School. After speaking at a Mariahs Challenge assembly, I felt I could make a difference. I have my friends who drink every weekend ~~now~~ sometimes I just ask, wanna stay in and watch a movie with me.

Mariahs Challenge has had a positive impact on my life and made me take a step up and be myself to my full potential.

THANK YOU!

Mariah's Challenge

Mariah McCarthy was a blossoming, young teenage girl when an intoxicated driver hit her and her friends. This tragic night devastated their families and the Butte community. Ever since this happened, there has been so much awareness raised about how detrimental drinking and driving can be to many people. Even though it usually starts with one person making an awful decision, it has a ripple effect. This story has influenced me because of the information about this topic and the effect it had and still does have to this day.

Following this heartbreaking story, a scholarship was formed in Mariah's name by her family. I first learned about this story when I was about seven years old, ever since then I vowed I would never get behind the wheel while being intoxicated. My cousin, Leo McCarthy, has spoken at numerous school events about the story which has only inspired me more to take this challenge. I have always refrained from using illegal drugs and alcohol. It just seems too unhealthy, especially for a developing brain. Alcohol is able to damage the liver too. It has always seemed like the healthier option is to avoid alcohol. In the situation that one gives in to the temptation, he or she should never get behind the wheel or operate any kind of machinery. Since alcohol has the capability to cloud one's judgment and they try to operate anything that escalates the situation drastically. I would never make that specific decision that could endanger the lives of not only myself but the people around me. This scholarship foundation has done an impeccable job giving people information about this crisis and has definitely made me think about this situation more often. It has also given me the desire to make the

community safer by not getting impaired by anything and choosing not to get behind the wheel.

On the contrary to my relation to Mariah McCarthy, I never really knew her. From what I have heard from the people that did know her, she was an amazing, young girl. I have had some of the same teachers that taught her and they absolutely adored her. East Middle School hosts the Mariah's Fun Run to support her and the foundation; they did not this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. My sister and I both had the opportunity to participate in this activity and it was an honor. There is also a trend called "Light Up Mariah" where on the anniversary of her passing people around Butte turn on their porch lights to honor and remember her (my family does this every year also). Mariah's story leaves an everlasting effect on the city of Butte.

On a final note, of all the stories I have heard in my lifetime, Mariah's has been one of the most impactful ones. Her life was taken way too soon but her story lingers and has helped many people. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to hear about her story and now apply for this scholarship. Her story has shaped the way I think of alcohol/drugs and has for many other people. I stand by this when I say, I will never impair my judgment/senses and get behind the wheel or get into a vehicle with someone who has.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

I remember when my parents first told me the story of Mariah McCarthy. We were visiting Butte, my hometown, and my parents wanted to stop by to see a few sentimental places from our time living there. The most memorable of these places was the cross placed on the side of the road where the accident had occurred. We placed necklace charms with angels engraved on them upon the memorial. I was immediately overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness. There is so much in this world that can not be controlled, despite how hard we may try. Mariah's Challenge has helped me realize that I should not take anything, no matter how small, for granted.

Life is the everything we have, it is everything we are given, and needs to be greatly appreciated. In the past year and a half, five people in my community, around the same age as me, have died in car related accidents. These instances, as well as Mariah's, have opened my eyes to the fact that anything can happen to anyone and that we are far from indestructible. They have helped me realize that there is so much in our lives to be grateful for. We take so much for granted everyday. Some days I find myself dreading having to go to school, see walking the dog as a chore, and finding the food on my plate to be unsettling. We need to remember that these are privileges that we have and that they can be taken away any given moment.

Among these tragedies, Mariah's has made me aware of the dangers of alcohol. Throughout high school, there have been situations where people have attempted to peer pressure me into drinking. In these cases, my mind goes back to the sadness I could hear in the voices of my parents when explaining to me what had happened. It has prevented me from doing anything that I would have regretted later on.

Although these incidents are horribly upsetting, I believe that I would not be the person I am today if they were to not have happened. They have allowed me to become a better person; a more caring, empathetic, and grateful human being. I intend to live by these ideals each and every day, and I accept Mariah's Challenge.

"How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life"

I had just gotten back from a Hannah Montana concert. We had been driving all day long and I was exhausted and fell asleep really early. That night, for some reason I woke up. I got up and looked out the window. I saw ambulances and police cars right outside my house. I was so tired that I just went back to sleep. I was only four years old, so I was not aware of what was going on. When I woke up the next morning, my parents told me what had happened. Again, being only four years old, I didn't quite understand what was happening. As the years went on, I started to understand what had actually happened. It made me really sad and I could not understand why someone would ever drive drunk. I thought back on what I had seen that night, and what had happened, and that was when I decided to not drink in high school.

When the cross was put up to honor Mariah where she died, I saw it everyday on my way to school and home. I could see it from the windows in my house, and it is a reminder everyday how important this challenge is. I decided that drinking was not worth it, if what happened to Mariah could be the consequence, the severity of taking someone's life.

When Leo McCarthy was one of the CNN Heroes, I started to learn more about Mariah's challenge and what the goal of it was. I was still pretty young, but it made me more aware of everything. I have constant reminders of Mariah's Challenge everyday, and I am lucky to have a community and the McCarthy family that spreads awareness for this issue. I have been peer pressured for all of high school to drink, but I have always refused because I committed to Mariah's Challenge and am always reminded of the reason I am doing it. I have still had many good times and made great memories in high school, but they did not involve drinking and I am thankful for that.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways. I have been made more aware of the dangers of drinking and driving. I have surrounded myself with people that live the same way, and I have educated myself on what alcohol can do to people. This challenge has kept me safe through high school, and has helped me resist peer pressure, and I am always going to be thankful for that.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life?

Accepting Mariah's challenge has truly been a great goal and accomplishment in my life. I grew up in an extremely healthy household, learning that drinking alcohol while being underage is just something you do not need to do in life. A huge lesson I have learned in my high school career is that without drinking you become a more social and outgoing person, because you have to learn to be able to talk to others without something altering your brain like alcohol does to people. Another positive coming out of this experience was who I would surround myself with. My friend group is amazing, I was never peer pressured into doing anything. When people would ask me to drink it wasn't even a question in my mind to say no. All throughout high school I have never had the desire to drink, because I never wanted to put myself in the danger underage drinking could do to me. Taking this into consideration it has made me become a stronger person, and will benefit me greatly in the future.

I was only four years old when Mariah lost her life due to drinking and driving. As the years went on I would always read and hear stories like hers and it taught me early to do things right and to take care of myself. By doing so I made a promise to myself to not drink in high school, because I never really saw the point of it. I am also proud to say that I am able to stand up for myself when it comes to just about anything, especially when it comes to drinking. People always ask me questions like "How do you not drink?" or "How is it so easy for you to say no?". The way I think of it is if I can't even say no to something like drinking then I wouldn't be able to say no to bigger problems in my life and it would consume me, just as alcohol has done to many people I know.

Life is so short and I always tell myself that I need to make the best of it. So far, I think I have made the most of it, and drinking alcohol was not even a factor playing into it. I hope others can look at this experience and realize how much life has to offer and how beautiful it really is. I am so grateful for my experience in accepting this challenge. I know it will forever be a huge accomplishment in my life that I will always remember.

Mariah's Challenge Scholarship

"How Mariah's Challenge has changed my life."

From a young age, I knew I did not want to be a kid who only wanted to party, drink, and do drugs. I always had the mindset that there is so much more to do in life, and the after-effects of drugs and alcohol do not look fun. I decided I would not drink or do any drugs throughout high school back in elementary school because it scared me, in all honesty. When I would see high schoolers drinking, I would always get confused. I would ask my parents why they were not in trouble, and they would try to explain what was happening, but it was not until I was older that I understood.

When I was in eighth grade, I heard Mariah's full story for the first time. My heart felt so heavy and just heartbroken from what happened to Mariah. It just breaks my heart that a soul was taken so young from this world because someone thought they could drive intoxicated. During eighth grade T.I.P. I accepted Mariah's Challenge because I wanted to help make an impact against drinking and driving. I always knew I did not want to drink or do drugs in high school, but this kept me accountable.

Mariah's story has shaped me into always trying to influence others to make the right decisions. Several of my peers attend parties that involve alcohol and drugs, and so do some of my friends. I have learned that if someone is going to drink, it is hard to convince them not to, but I can give them a safe option to get home. I always offer to give people a ride home no matter where they are or what time it is, and if I know that my friends or peers are drinking, I will remind them that I will give them a ride home if they cannot find one. Over the last few years, I have provided many rides home. I never want to see anyone I know get hurt from an inconsiderate decision or hurt someone else in the process of them driving intoxicated.

I am now a senior in high school and have abstained from alcohol and drugs despite all the peer pressure. Helping others be safe and making the right decisions, whether they are intoxicated or

not, is something I enjoy doing. Seeing people hurt because they lost a loved one is always heartbreaking, but when it could have been prevented by making a phone call is awful. I promise never to drink and drive when I am old enough to drink. Mariah's story has saved so many lives, and I plan on continuing her story by accepting the challenge of not drinking and driving and helping others make it home safe and alive as well.

March 31, 2021

"How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life"

I am grateful for the privilege to be associated with Mariah's Challenge for most of my high school career. I remember my first experience with this program was running the mile around East Middle School. That opportunity was the first time I had been challenged by the program, and I am grateful for the various ways it has continued to challenge me.

In addition to challenging me, Mariah's Challenge has supported me and encouraged me to maintain my standards. I have already been taught the decision to refrain from drinking and drugs thanks to my parents and religion, and the Challenge provided benefits to holding onto my beliefs and standards. It helped me to continue making the right decisions and support others around me trying to do the same. I believe that that is the main takeaway of this program: to make the right decisions by not partaking of drugs or alcohol. The Challenge has certainly succeeded in helping students do just this, and I am grateful it has done this for me. Throughout high school, students are faced with hundreds of life-changing decisions concerning alcohol and related substances, and I am glad Mariah's Challenge has helped me make the right ones, one of them accepting the Challenge.

Mariah's Challenge has also helped me stand strong even when my peers are out drinking and doing bad things. I have not always been surrounded by peer pressure, but this program supported me and was always in the back of my mind when faced with such situations. The Challenge provided further aid besides my already-existing standards taught to me by my parents, and I am grateful for its influence. Without it, I would probably not be the same person I am today, and I suppose my life would look a lot different. It has been an advantage for me to strive to keep my mind clear, therefore helping me maintain a 4.0 GPA and become a Valedictorian.

In essence, Mariah's Challenge has changed my life through helping me maintain my standards, stay motivated and strong throughout my high school career, and focus on making the right decisions. It has supported me and has been one of my main encouragements and inspirations when facing difficult decisions or situations. There is a real power to this program, and I look forward to similar opportunities in my future life.

How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

I was still young when Mariah's Challenge had started, but the impact it has had on my life is something I'll never forget. I'll always remember the times growing up when we would be talked to about Mariah's challenge. It would be at school or school events like TIP and it was always nice to have that reminder of this challenge we had taken. We would get the bracelets and I would wear mine everywhere I went, a symbol that I was going to complete the challenge.

Just like many others, I went into high school with the intentions of not drinking. Sadly as I've gone through these four years I've seen people give in. I've watched as many people I had gone to school with, that I would consider childhood friends, give in to the temptations of drinking. Seeing these things really hit me hard, I lost friends due to the fact that I just didn't want to be around them drinking. It felt like I was at a lost point in my life. Everyone I had been around went down a route it seemed like we had agreed on not taking. After all of this I separated myself from them and focused on my own goals and ambitions, Mariah's Challenge being a driving force for me to keep going. Through this I was able to find friends with similar beliefs. While other kids were out partying we would be creating our fun, like going on camping trips together or skiing in our winters. Many would question us and ask why we don't drink, making it seem like we were different for not drinking. We would try to come up with many excuses, but one that has always seemed to work would be to tell them we are doing Mariah's Challenge. They would stop pressuring us when we would say something like that. It was as they respected our decisions and it made another reason for me to be grateful for the challenge. We would still be confused when we would hear about classmates get MIP's and their excuse is there's nothing else to do in this town. There's plenty of great things to do in this area, you just have to open yourself up to them. I hope more students in the future learn about these great things and abstain from drinking. Many may feel like their missing out, but if they stick to the challenge and find friends with the same belief they will learn they are not missing out at all.

Mariah's Challenge is something I'll forever be grateful for. It has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. I'm happy to say that through the challenge I was able to get through high school without any drinking and I was able to stay focused on my goals. I hope the challenge can continue to work towards building great futures for many children to come!

How Mariah's challenge changed my life

Growing up in a town like Butte you see the effects of drugs and alcohol everywhere. Sometimes it's from your parents having a few drinks a dinner, or it's seeing kids come in from off-campus lunch high as a kite, and the biggest one is just being after dark where all the bars in town are primarily located. I knew some of the consequences of drugs and alcohol, but as I grew up I learned what those substances do to a person. I think I learned the most however when I was in middle school and Dave McCarthy came to talk to us. He told us the story about Mariah's life and how it tragically ended. I decided right there and then that I would not participate in any drinking, especially drinking and driving.

When I got to high school I saw more and more people around me and in my age group drinking. Every weekend there would be a party where people would be drinking and doing stupid things. Luckily the group of friends I made didn't do those sorts of things. Instead, we went to the place where we all volunteered and spent most of our free time, the Orphan Girl Theatre. At this theatre, I would meet much older friends and some that were even much younger than me. I became a leader at this place and I wanted to be the best example for the children that were under me. This made me know that my decision to participate in Mariah's challenge was a great thing.

Being involved with Mariah's challenge helped me become a great leader and it got me to where I am now. Thanks to the leadership opportunity's I was able to gain from the involvement I got into a school of my dreams where I get to major in the thing I have been doing for the past 7 years of my life. Being apart of this challenge encouraged me to be unlike my peers and be a leader in my community.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Before I started high school at Butte High, I promised myself that I wouldn't drink during my time there. Many students my age made the same promise, but a majority of them didn't follow through with it. When I was a student at Ramsay School, I remember having an assembly about Mariah's Challenge. They explained Mariah's story and why they believed that each student should turn away from drinking in high school. That moment was when I realized that all actions have consequences, especially when someone's mind is being influenced by alcohol. I knew I was not going to be one of the people that risked all of my hard work for a few nights of pointless fun.

Throughout my time at Butte High, I have always put my education and athletics above everything else. Most of my weekends are spent competing in rodeos out of town, which doesn't leave much time for going with friends anyways. However, on the weekends that I did go with my friends, we usually ended up at a party. While I was there, I really understood how the concept of "peer pressure" is very real. Most of the people there would tell me to "just have a sip" or "one drink wouldn't hurt." Each time one of my peers would say these to me, Mariah's story would be floating in the back of my head reminding me of the promise I made to myself years before.

Mariah's challenge helps students understand both the short term and long-term effects that substances can have on their bodies. It has been the reason I chose to stay away from alcohol during high school. The challenge has given me the confidence to not give into peer pressure. This organization has impacted many young lives, including myself. Although it is very unfortunate and tragic, Mariah's story will continue to influence many peoples lives for many years to come.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life?

Accepting Mariah's challenge has truly been a great goal and accomplishment in my life. I grew up in an extremely healthy household, learning that drinking alcohol while being underage is just something you do not need to do in life. A huge lesson I have learned in my high school career is that without drinking you become a more social and outgoing person, because you have to learn to be able to talk to others without something altering your brain like alcohol does to people. Another positive coming out of this experience was who I would surround myself with. My friend group is amazing, I was never peer pressured into doing anything. When people would ask me to drink it wasn't even a question in my mind to say no. All throughout high school I have never had the desire to drink, because I never wanted to put myself in the danger underage drinking could do to me. Taking this into consideration it has made me become a stronger person, and will benefit me greatly in the future.

I was only four years old when Mariah lost her life due to drinking and driving. As the years went on I would always read and hear stories like hers and it taught me early to do things right and to take care of myself. By doing so I made a promise to myself to not drink in high school, because I never really saw the point of it. I am also proud to say that I am able to stand up for myself when it comes to just about anything, especially when it comes to drinking. People always ask me questions like "How do you not drink?" or "How is it so easy for you to say no?". The way I think of it is if I can't even say no to something like drinking then I wouldn't be able to say no to bigger problems in my life and it would consume me, just as alcohol has done to many people I know.

Life is so short and I always tell myself that I need to make the best of it. So far, I think I have made the most of it, and drinking alcohol was not even a factor playing into it. I hope others can look at this experience and realize how much life has to offer and how beautiful it really is. I am so grateful for my experience in accepting this challenge. I know it will forever be a huge accomplishment in my life that I will always remember.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Before I began my journey through high school, I had already known that I wanted to commit myself to staying alcohol-free. For me, it seemed like a natural choice, and I wasn't scared or anxious to make this commitment. Instead, I felt pride and a fulfilling comfort gather around me—like I became part of something bigger, something great. I believe that great comfort is Mariah's Challenge. Truth be told, Mariah's story has influenced my life long before high school and I'm sure will continue to in the future. Mariah's Challenge has allowed me the courage to break free from the pressures of alcohol and drug use while giving me opportunities to help others in my community to become the person that I am truly meant to be.

Being free from alcohol throughout my years at Butte High School has done great things for me. I have maintained a clear and calm mind, which has helped me to have good attendance, maintain the highest grades I possibly can, and stay out of any trouble. However, where Mariah's Challenge has really impacted my life is my community involvement and volunteering. Because I chose not to drink, I never became part of the party culture that has plagued many of my classmates' evenings and weekends. Instead, I often use these free times to get out and volunteer around the Butte community. A week rarely goes by that I can't find an opportunity to enjoy volunteering at one event or another. Whether it be ushering at the civic center, assisting guests at a banquet, or cooking food for a fundraiser, the connections I have been able to make with the people of the community are an irreplaceable part of who I am today. My time spent volunteering here in Butte has grown and nourished my passion for helping others while shaping my character and values into my best self. Although abstaining from drinking might seem small at first, it can grow to have a huge impact.

Mariah's Challenge has created a community where I feel comfortable and am proud to be part of. As more and more people accept the challenge and combat underage and irresponsible drinking, the peer pressure to participate in these activities becomes less and less. The strong community built from those who have accepted Mariah's Challenge has created a space where not drinking is not only socially accepted, but is also seen as a display of good character and pride in oneself. It is this community from which Mariah's Challenge has changed my life the most. Having the constant encouragement and support to not drink has really kept me on track through high school. The growing strength of Mariah's Challenge in our community has given me the freedom to break away from the pressures of drinking and become the person I want to be.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Growing up in the same community as Mariah has drastically impacted my decisions. Butte is a place unlike any other, and it is hard to fathom how such bad things can happen, even here. Mariah's story has been something I have learned about since early in elementary school and it has inspired me to abstain from drugs and alcohol. Seeing how drinking and driving negatively affects so many people and their families every year made the entire thought of drinking extremely unappealing to me.

Mariah's challenge encouraged me to want to be a leader, and a good influence to all those around me. This challenge has inspired me to avoid the peer pressure that comes with the high school experience. Quite honestly, I would much rather read a book than go to a party on any given day. It has shown me how strong my willpower is and that, "you should stand up for what you believe in even if, in the end, you are the only one left standing." Many of my friends from elementary and middle school who used to vow they would never drink underage have sadly went back on their word. It is heartbreaking to watch so many of my peer's act like drinking and doing drugs is no big deal and that, "it is just a high school thing." It is even harder watching them all fall down the rabbit hole of addiction before they are twenty years old without even realizing what is happening.

In the seventh grade we learned about Mariah's story in depth and the same year we read my favorite book called *The Outsiders*. In chapter one it states, "Soda is one of a kind. He can get drunk on a drag race or dancing without ever getting near alcohol. In our neighborhood it is rare to find a kid who does not drink once in a while. But Soda never touches a drop—he does not need to. He gets drunk on just plain living," and ever since then I have desperately wanted to be like Sodapop Curtis. I want to be happy and live a great life without depending on a substance to do it for me. I am thankful for Mariah's Challenge because it has changed my life by allowing me to see that all the stereotypical high school things would not be worth it in the long run, and that I have my whole life ahead of me. It has taught me to inspire others and to "be the good I wish to see in the world."

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

At a very young age, I decided to accept Mariah's Challenge, and I have stuck by that decision throughout high school. At an early age, my parents told me Mariah's story, and I heard the story from Leo McCarthy in school. He encouraged us to accept the challenge, and it made sense to me. My parents made sure that I knew the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and I knew that I wouldn't use them.

I don't care about popularity and doing the things that others are choosing to do while using substances. I have found a good group of friends that enjoy participating in outdoor activities, while not engaging in the risky behaviors that go along with drugs and alcohol. We find plenty of things to do like skiing, sledding, and just hanging out with each other. We support each other in avoiding peer pressure and looking out for each other. We don't need drugs or alcohol to have fun together.

I have used other free time to mentor younger children in the community. I have volunteered at a local elementary school through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Through this activity, I have built a relationship with a young boy, and I have realized how lucky I have been to have supportive people in my life. I hope to also influence his decisions and help him accept Mariah's Challenge. I have also been an assistant coach and umpire for Northwest Little League, and I hope that I am a good role model to all of the children that I come into contact with through these activities.

I have chosen to keep this promise to Mariah, my family, and friends. I want to be a good role model for my younger sister, brother, and cousins. I want to make my parents and grandparents proud of my decisions. I want my friends to continue this challenge with me, as we tackle the pressure together.

As I continue my journey, I hope to continue to accept the challenge throughout college. I want to keep a clear head that helps me make good choices and focus on my academic goals. I plan to pursue a degree from Montana Tech in Biological Sciences, and I hope to one day become a physician. The Mariah's Challenge Scholarship will help me to reach my academic goals in pursuit of future success. Thank you very much for considering me for the Mariah's Challenge Scholarship!

How has Mariah's Challenge changed my life? This is one subject I have been wondering ever since I took up the challenge my freshman year of high school. Growing up Mariah was one of my sister's best friends and I always remembered Mariah to be someone I wanted to be when I got to her age. She always knew how to make me smile and always could bring a light to my sister's life as well. That day we lost her, I remember how broken my sister was on the outside and on the inside. I could not imagine losing someone you loved so dearly to you. This is what inspired me to take on this challenge because I would not want anyone to lose or for me to lose someone dear to me due to an accident with alcohol.

When going through high school, alcohol and drugs become the center point of how my peers would often spend their time. It always seemed to be in the "cool" to be involved with drugs and alcohol during your high school years. The "cool" however did not stick right with me. Watching people change due to these substances made me think, "is this really what I want to do?" Often getting pressured to be apart of these things really did not stick right with me. My peers often would look down on me for not participating in these activities, but whenever I would say no to them my mind would flash back to how I would feel if I lost them or if they lost me. So, I continued to put my foot staying away from any form of alcohol or drugs.

Putting my foot down made me into a stronger person and I watched as my peers were wasting their lives away becoming addicted these types of substances. I knew that because I could take on this challenge is how I would become stronger in the way I wanted to keep Mariah's spirit alive. I knew that I wasn't wasting the fun time of my high school years avoiding alcohol and drugs, I was really just playing it smart because I want a future to where I can be proud of the choices I make. I know not everyone will want to make the same choices I make but in all honesty this oath I have taken has made proud to be me. I feel enlightened to help be a part of a challenge to honor someone like Mariah and I hope this challenge can change the way students act on drugs and alcohol.

This Challenge in the end is what I want to be most proud of when I leave high school. Not having to fear about my inner and outer self-changing because of drugs and alcohol makes me feel like I really am making a mark on keeping Mariah's spirit alive through this oath. Students should take these types of things seriously through their high school years but to know that I am one of the only few classmates in my class taking this oath to better how the youth is around alcohol and drugs really changes my life for the better and helps me realize I really am doing something amazing. Not only for me but for Mariah and her family as well.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Not only has Mariah's Challenge had a huge impact on my high school career, but it has also had a huge impact on my entire life. Because of Mariah's Challenge, I have been able to stay true to my morals, make the right decisions, and lead by example. I live my life to these standards each and every day, and I will continue to do so. Staying true to my morals helps me to stay true to myself, and it keeps me from saying yes to peer pressure. When I make the right decisions, I keep myself out of uncomfortable situation. This also saves me from a great deal of guilt. When I lead by example, I can show others that they can be leaders to. I am also able to encourage others to stay on the right path. Great leaders are the ones that show others that there can be more than one leader. These three lessons have shaped who I am today.

Honestly, not drinking has been the best decision I have ever made throughout high school. I am proud to say that I accepted Mariah's Challenge and that I stayed true to my word. I have been able to find my real passions which include running and skiing, and I may have not found these beautiful things if I would have succumbed to peer pressure. I have also learned that I do not need to drink in order to have a fun time. Mariah's Challenge has helped me find the things that bring me the most joy, and it has helped me blossom into the person I am today. I will forever be grateful for the lessons Mariah's Challenge has taught me.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

By the time I was eight years old I noticed how uncomfortable it felt to be around a group of people drinking alcohol. Around the same time, I told myself that I would never get involved with somebody who drank alcohol. Although it is becoming a nearly impossible task. I know not everybody drinks, but it seems like every other weekend I see my friends posting on social media about them going to parties and drinking while I stayed home and spent the weekend with my four younger siblings. My friends are aware of my decision to avoid alcohol until I am 21, however, that has not stopped them from trying to peer pressure me in to going to parties and drinking with them. To this day I haven't gone back on my promise to myself when I was eight years old.

Growing up in Deer Lodge I did not hear about Mariah's tragedy until I transferred to Butte High School for my junior year. A friend of mine was talking about applying for the scholarship and I had no idea what he was talking about. He gave me a brief summary of her story and told me where to read the rest of it. After reading the whole story, I was left heartbroken. My dedication to refrain from drinking until I was 21 only intensified. Even though my parents raised me in a safe environment and made sure that I was not making dumb decisions when it came to alcohol, I could see how alcohol affected families. My aunt divorced an abusive husband who still goes on drunken rants about how she took his kids away from him and made him gamble all his money away. Mariah is not the only person to lose her life to underage drunk drivers. Many families across the country mourn loved ones lost to the oblivious mistakes of younger people.

It is because of Mariah and her sacrifice that I am willing to stand up for my decision and encourage others to do the same. Tragically, many families continue to be torn apart by the careless decisions made while under the influence of alcohol. We must continue to lift up Mariah's and other's tragic stories to educate the younger generations on the true cost of underage drinking and the real consequences of drinking and driving.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Shaped My Life

Ever since a very early age, I have known about Mariah's Challenge. I have a brother who is twelve years older than me, and to put this in perspective, when he was graduating high school, I was only graduating kindergarten. However, in this short length of time in my early childhood, my brother made a lasting impression on me, and he had accepted Mariah's challenge. As well and being one of the most honest and honorable people I have ever known, he flawlessly executed this challenge, and still continues the habits he learned as a result of the challenge in his life today. I remember always seeing him wearing his pink bracelet, which I was very jealous of, and I wanted to know more about it. While I did not understand the situation very well as I was only four or five years old, I could easily see how important this pledge meant to him.

In addition, my parents have developed values in me about alcohol and its consequences. I have learned a lot from them, and I feel confident about my decision not to drink until I am of legal age. In addition to teaching me not to drink while underage, they have talked to me about how to drink responsibly when I am older. In combination the behaviors exhibited by my brother and the values instilled in me by my parents, I have made the decision to never drink until I am of age and when I am of age, to drink responsibly.

My values about alcohol have been integrated from my parents, brother, extended family, and even my peers; however, I have also developed values on my own. Being a part of high school and the Butte community, I can see how underage drinking affects my peers. Personally I am not a fan at all of these actions. Having this mindset has allowed me to shape my friend groups and have the same general idea amongst all of my friends that we do not want to have anything to do with underage drinking. For me, this has been a very rewarding lifestyle and I feel much better about myself when I am not participating in these illegal and frankly irresponsible actions.

Mariah's Challenge has had an immense impact on my life both directly and indirectly. Knowing Mariah's story and seeing how it affects others really emphasizes the importance of preventing underage drinking, and I stand by this. Mariah's Challenge has shaped my views in more ways than resisting underage drinking, but has also helped me develop my resistance to peer pressure. I am extremely proud of myself for my ability to resist peer pressure, and I pride myself on being able to authoritatively say "No" whenever I feel uncomfortable. As I move into college, I will continue to carry on my pledge for Mariah's Challenge, and effectively resist underage drinking.

How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

Mariah's Challenge has provided me the opportunity to keep the promise I made to myself and my family that I would not drink until I was the legal age. I also took the pledge to never drive while under the influence and not let intoxicated individuals behind the wheel. Mariah's Challenge gave me the push I needed to keep my promise. I remember sitting in on assemblies where we learned about Mariah and the tragedy that had occurred. Even at a young age, I felt a connection and knew this would be a significant change in my life. I reflected on how my decisions not only impact myself but also impact others around me. Mariah's Challenge was my initiative and drove me not to drink or drive and has led me to partake in other activities.

Instead of going to parties, I found myself lending a helping hand with the Montana History club or working on my drive at the golf course. I found alternatives of getting high or drinking by being with my friends and family and learning more about who I am. There was always time to learn a new skill, such as cooking or picking up a new book. My friends and I would get together to have a friendly competition at game night or just relaxed while watching a movie. These experiences are what gave me a thrill for life and a sense of adventure. I figured out that I did not need alcohol to enjoy life, and I could be enjoying the youth I have. I have until I am twenty-one until I die to be able to drink, but I only have a limited number of years to experience my youth. Alcohol is not exactly all fun as it is made out to be, but I am glad I have chosen to abstain from it. I have remembered all of my high school experiences and all the beautiful memories I will reflect upon. From Mariah's Challenge, my life has personally changed for the better. I realize life is too short to be worried about drinking and the next big party when I could be enjoying my time loving the experience and wonders it has to offer.

“How Mariah’s Challenge has changed my life”

I had just gotten back from a Hannah Montana concert. We had been driving all day long and I was exhausted and fell asleep really early. That night, for some reason I woke up. I got up and looked out the window. I saw ambulances and police cars right outside my house. I was so tired that I just went back to sleep. I was only four years old, so I was not aware of what was going on. When I woke up the next morning, my parents told me what had happened. Again, being only four years old, I didn't quite understand what was happening. As the years went on, I started to understand what had actually happened. It made me really sad and I could not understand why someone would ever drive drunk. I thought back on what I had seen that night, and what had happened, and that was when I decided to not drink in high school.

When the cross was put up to honor Mariah where she died, I saw it everyday on my way to school and home. I could see it from the windows in my house, and it is a reminder everyday how important this challenge is. I decided that drinking was not worth it, if what happened to Mariah could be the consequence, the severity of taking someone's life.

When Leo McCarthy was one of the CNN Heroes, I started to learn more about Mariah's challenge and what the goal of it was. I was still pretty young, but it made me more aware of everything. I have constant reminders of Mariah's Challenge everyday, and I am lucky to have a community and the McCarthy family that spreads awareness for this issue. I have been peer pressured for all of high school to drink, but I have always refused because I committed to Mariah's Challenge and am always reminded of the reason I am doing it. I have still had many good times and made great memories in high school, but they did not involve drinking and I am thankful for that.

Mariah's Challenge has changed my life in many ways. I have been made more aware of the dangers of drinking and driving, I have surrounded myself with people that live the same way, and I have educated myself on what alcohol can do to people. This challenge has kept me safe through high school, and has helped me resist peer pressure, and I am always going to be thankful for that.