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High school is a whirlwind of experiences – from late-night studying sessions to Friday nights spent under Naranche Stadium lights cheering on the Butte High Bulldogs, and everything in between. It is also a time where experimentation with alcohol and drugs can seem like a rite of passage for many of my peers. Yet, as I reflect on the goals, I have set for myself and the kind of person I want to become, I realize that indulging in these substances would only derail me from my path for a bright future.

Mariah's Challenge changed the way I thought about drugs and alcohol. By choosing to take the challenge, it gave me a sense of accountability and made me realize there is more to high school than partying. For me, it meant navigating social situations where alcohol may be prevalent while staying true to myself and the commitment I made. I played basketball, soccer, ran track, and worked a part-time job, which allowed me to make friends with similar interests and build a network of friends, family, and mentors to support me. By doing this, I was able to find other kids my age that I could interact with who were not into partying and drinking.

The ripple effects of taking Mariah's Challenge extend beyond Butte. It has taught me that it is okay not to do what everyone else is doing. It has allowed me to look for other ways to have fun with my friends. Decreased rates of underage drinking and drug use lead to fewer substance-related accidents, injuries, and long-term health problems, which contribute to the well-being of society.

Waiting until I am twenty-one to decide if I want to drink allows me time to make a responsible choice for my future. Because of the foundation I have built because of accepting Mariah's Challenge, I will be better equipped to make that decision when the time comes.

I am appreciative of those who have already taken the challenge and hope that younger generations will consider taking it as well.

## How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

When I was younger, I had addicts on both sides of my family. Whether they were life-long addicts or someone trying to recover, I was surrounded by people struggling with addiction. I also grew up hearing what happened to Mariah and then in middle school when we would run Mariah's mile. All of this combined led me to never try illegal substances.

During my childhood, my grandma was always smoking, and my brother was always in jail for drug abuse. My grandma was a lifelong addict and I never saw her without a cigarette in her hand or near her. When I was finally old enough to do stuff with her, she was too sick and could hardly move. She ended up dying when I was in sixth grade from a mix of cancer and drug related problems. My brother got addicted to drugs when he ran away from home at sixteen. He was always in and out of jail from the time I was born until I was thirteen. Since then, he has managed to get clean and is doing good for himself. These are just the main two that affected me, there are plenty more on both sides of my family.

When I was growing up, I was always hearing stories of Mariah whether from school or just from people in the community. There would always be speakers at school talking about Mariah's Challenge and it is just something that I'll always remember. In middle school we had a whole day dedicated to Mariah's Challenge where we ran Mariah's Mile. My whole life Mariah's challenge has always been around me even now.

The combination of the addiction struggles in my family and the stories of Mariah I heard my whole life is mainly the reason that I have stayed away from drugs, alcohol, and other substances a teenager should not have.

## **How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life**

For many, high school can be a very difficult time in life. Balancing all of the pressures that come with high school including schoolwork, sports, and social interactions can be very challenging. Personally, Mariah's Challenge has provided me with a higher purpose to strive for and it has allowed me to better myself. Instead of partying or underage drinking, I have used these opportunities to work toward my goal of playing college baseball. I have been able to spend countless hours perfecting my craft, instead of getting in trouble. Mariah's challenge has been the straight arrow that I have followed throughout my 4 years of high school that will hopefully help me to achieve my goals. In fact, for many years, I proudly wore Mariah's wings on my travel baseball uniforms when I was younger. Mr. McCarthy was often a generous sponsor of our team and I clearly remember him coming to the field and sharing his story of Mariah. I was only 2 years old when she passed away, but because of Mr. McCarthy's stories and passion to change the culture of drinking in our town, I feel that Mariah has had a profound impact on my life and the choices that I have made.

Mariah's challenge has taught me many valuable lessons in life, but none as important as self-control. This challenge has set me on the right path and has given me the confidence to avoid peer pressure and to focus on chasing my dreams. I know it is important to lead a healthy lifestyle in order to achieve a successful future. For that, I will be forever grateful to Mariah's challenge and the McCarthy family.

## **How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life**

Throughout my life Mariah's Challenge has been something I have looked towards for guidance and support. It has been a life-changing opportunity that I am proud to be a part of. It has brought many positive changes to the community of Butte Montana and myself, where drugs and alcohol are a big problem. Without Mariah's Challenge and the support that has come from it, I would not be the same person I am today.

Over the years Mariah's Challenge has brought me nothing but success. Whether it be on the field, court, or classroom, I have only become a better person from it. Athletically, the challenge has shown me that my actions outside of the gym define me as a player. When things got hard, I turned to sports, spending countless hours working on what I knew was truly important; my future. In the classroom it has shown me to strive to be the best I can, and to spend my free time working on myself rather than falling into peer pressure.

Equally important, Mariah's Challenge has taught me the idea of transformational leadership. This specific type of leadership means leading an approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. This idea plays a key factor in my life and has taught me many lessons. Because of this, I like to give my time to others to better them. By volunteering at organizations such as the TIP lock in, I have helped lead by example, and show the younger generation the impacts and outcomes of staying sober.

Overall, Mariah's Challenge has had a positive impact on my life and has shaped me into the person I am today. It has brought me motivation, new friends, and something to look towards. I hope to inspire others to join Mariah's Challenge, as it has been life changing for me.

## **How Mariahs Challenge Has Change My Life**

Mariah's challenge has had a significant impact on my life. Growing up I always heard about Mariah's challenge, but I never knew what it was. This all changed when I entered seventh grade. Mariah's father Mr. McCarthy spoke at East Middle School about his daughter and how she got killed by a drunk driver. I was moved by his courage and words because it was not easy for him to give that speech. But he was giving this speech for his daughter to live on and for the younger generations to know about the risks of alcohol. At the end of the speech, he gave us a challenge to be abstinent from alcohol and I accepted his challenge.

As I got older, I noticed how my peers and friends started drinking alcohol. Seeing everyone drink made me confused on what to do. I did not know if I should join them or be the loser who does not. I decided that I would not drink. At the beginning it was tough to say no because all my friends did it. I did not want to be the only one who did not drink. But Mariahs challenge gave me the courage to say no and not drink.

Even after this challenge is completed, I will not drink for a variety of reasons. The reasons I will abstain from alcohol are Mariahs Challenge and my health. I have seen firsthand how people act when alcohol gets in their system, and I do not want to be involved in that. But the main reason is my health. I was born with one kidney, and I know that drinking alcohol will damage my kidney. I would like to live a long healthy life and I know that drinking alcohol could kill me.

Mariah's challenge has changed my life because it initially gave me the courage to refuse alcohol. If it were not for this challenge I do not know if I would have refused alcohol or gave in. I will always be grateful that Mr. McCarthy gave his speech because it helped me establish my values. His speech taught me that alcohol can ruin lives and on the night of October

27, 2007, alcohol ruined two people's lives. I am sad that Mariah was taken away so soon but because of her sacrifice she has changed my life and other people's lives for the better.

## **How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life**

I still remember my introduction to Mariah's Challenge. I was pretty young, and a student at Hillcrest Elementary. The whole school gathered into the gym for our presentation. What I remember clearest from the presentation was how I felt. Still over a decade later I remember the pain and sadness I felt from the story. It was a lot to process at the time, but also priceless to have while growing up. From then on, I knew I had to make good decisions with my life.

As I got older and continued into middle school and high school, my decision to stay sober started to face more challenges. I was now in the position of there being partying, drinking, and smoking. I still didn't have an interest in joining these and felt offput when around others that weren't sober. Mariah's challenge helped cement my own views within myself and kept me from following others' expectations.

Now that I'm in my senior year, I can really recognize how I have best stayed away from drinking. I've really dove into my education and been a part of different activities. I've found clubs that focus on volunteering. I've worked a good job throughout high school. I've proved to myself that there are positive activities that are better than drinking.

Outside of my own life, I've seen how Mariah's Challenge has impacted those around me. Since getting my driver's license I've often been volunteered as a designated driver, but I couldn't be gladder. It shows how those around me respect the fact that they should not drive after drinking. Because of Mariah's Challenge I have made better life decisions and the people around me have become better versions of themselves. I will always remember Mariah's challenge and use it to help guide my future.

## **“How Mariah’s Challenge Has Changed My Life”**

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## How Mariah's Challenge Has Changed My Life

My oldest sister was the first to introduce me to Mariah's challenge. When she received the scholarship, she also received a bag of gifts. One of these gifts was a coin. Fourth grade me needed this coin. My sister, being an exemplary role model, told me I could have it under two conditions. The first being I had to accept Mariah's challenge and the second being I could never lose that coin. After a brief description of Mariah's challenge, I accepted. I still reminisce about that day whenever I look at that coin on my desk.

I am forever grateful to Mariah's Challenge for the guidance it has given me. Having accepted the challenge at such a young age was a blessing. Alcoholism in my family has always been prevalent. From grandparents to aunts and uncles to cousins, I have seen the worst of it. The ideals of this challenge helped me create guidelines to set my own path. The emphasis on responsibility, resilience, and self-respect Mariah's Challenge helped guide me toward has helped me stand-up for myself in peer pressure situations and low points in my own life.

The hardest part of Mariah's Challenge is the toll it takes on a person socially. I had always wanted to fit in with the quote on quote "Cool" kids. These peers of mine were not always the best role models for each other and if one did not take part in their misdeeds, then they were excluded from the group. I saw from this that I needed to find a community of my own.

Mariah's Challenge taught me the importance of community and support networks in overcoming adversity. By connecting me with like-minded peers and mentors who shared similar experiences, Mariah's Challenge provided me with a sense of belonging and solidarity that I had never known before. These relationships not only strengthened my resolve to stay true to the principles of Mariah's Challenge but also inspired me to pay it forward by supporting others in their journey toward sobriety and self-improvement, because everyone deserves a second chance at a good sober life with uplifting people around them.

This challenge has done wonders for many lives just like mine. I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity I have been able to partake in because of the sobriety Mariah's Challenge made me maintain. Through its unwavering commitment to promote responsible decision making and prevention of underage drinking, Mariah's Challenge has equipped me with the tools and more importantly the mindset to overcome the future obstacles in my path. As I continue to uphold the values of Mariah's Challenge in my everyday life, I am reminded of just how much one person can impact the morals of countless others today, and long into the future.

March 23, 2024

## How Mariah's Challenge Changed My Life

As a little girl, I always knew the story of Mariah McCarthy, and it's a story that I think every kid in Butte should know. Even though I lived in California and Washington for most of my high school years, I still carried Mariah's story and the challenge with me. Underaged drinking and driving is a problem across America, and Mariah's Challenge is the reason I understood this at a young age and chose not to partake in it, but that's not the only thing that this challenge did for me.

When I was in sixth grade, I was given one of those pink Mariah's Challenge bracelets, and I wore that bracelet every single day until the worn rubber eventually broke on me in one of my high school years. Looking back on photos from years ago where you can see that pink bracelet sitting on my wrist, I'm glad that middle school and early high school me had that bracelet and what it stood for with me every day. That bracelet was a constant reminder to me not only of the consequences of taking part in underaged drinking, but that all my actions matter.

That's what Mariah's Challenge is to me. It's more than underaged drinking and driving. It's about how all your actions, no matter how small you think they may be, can have an impact on you and the people around you for the rest of your life.

I am thankful to have known Mariah's Challenge and to have gotten to be a part of it. Even if I eventually would have learned that my actions have consequences later in my adult years, I'm grateful that Mariah's Challenge taught it to me so young. I don't think I would be the person I am today without knowing this story. This challenge encouraged me to not only to not participate in underaged drinking, but also to be mindful of what I do and understand how my actions represent who I am.

## How Mariah's Challenge Changed my Life

Describing what exactly Mariah's challenge means to me is complicated. For most of my life Mariah's challenge has been around. In a way, avoiding drugs was baked into my mindset from such a young age I've never really considered it much of an option. In elementary school, I had this one fuzzy pink sweatshirt, with one mainstay, a small, copper Mariah's challenge pin I had gotten while attending the scholarship ceremony once with my dad. I wore it everywhere and when I got anxious, I would run my thumb over it to calm myself down.

I can't say that I've never been tempted to drink, I'm a teenager, of course I have. The difference is that every time I've wanted to drink, something had been wrong, I felt broken, distressed, and I'd think, "well it works for other people". But I never did, so, why is that?

Partly, of course it was common sense that if I was going to drink, when I was crying over math homework probably was not the best time to try it out. But, well, a larger part of it was knowledge of myself, I have an addictive personality, I know that, anyone who's seen my thousand hours in my favorite video game knows that. I can reason with myself all I want, but reasoning with my lizard brain is another thing entirely. The largest part however, is more complicated to explain, a little voice, a little hand smoothing over a copper pin; the first time I saw my father cry, and wondering if I'd be the reason it happened next, the thought of losing a kind of trust with my loved ones that I could never regain. The idea of hurting myself or others when I could have so easily done one thing differently.

This I know, has to do with what exactly Mariah's challenge means to me. Mariah's challenge has been a part of my life since I was two or three years old, my parents have always been close with the organization and the people involved. Of course, that meant the core beliefs of Mariah's challenge were imparted onto me by a very early age. My family has always made it abundantly clear that drinking was

not a bad thing, but that, for my safety and others, never to drink when I'm underage, and to never drink and drive. It was never a matter of drinking being something bad, or unsavory, but a simple matter of my safety and the safety of those around me. Even as a little girl, I appreciated that honesty.

Mariah's Challenge has been a part of my life since the beginning, influencing my life and decisions since before I was able to realize. But I wouldn't trade that for the world, Mariah's challenge has demonstrably changed my life for the better. I truly cannot visualize what my life now would look like without Mariah's challenge.