

While growing up, I experienced many adverse childhood experiences. I was taken away from my single mother at the age of six. She was an addict and we were living on the streets in San Diego. I was lucky that they were able to find my father and place me with him instead of growing up in the foster care system. I've lived in Ninilchik Alaska since I was 6. My dad is a retired Naval Fire Craft Search and Rescue. He had me when he was 48 years old and was never planning on children. While I know my dad loves me, he is not a nurturer nor was he financially prepared for a child. I have been working part time since I was 12 dog sitting, baby sitting, doing whatever I could to pay for my school supplies and anything else I wanted or needed. He didn't have the funds for even the simple things like girls shampoo. I have had to work hard and fend for myself most of my life. It wasn't until seventh grade that I even learned to recognize right and wrong or that there were healthy and unhealthy relationships in the world. I was too busy surviving.

In seventh grade I was introduced to an amazing program called Project Grad (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams). Project GRAD helps students in rural communities plan their post-secondary education. The first event I attended was Phlight Club. It is aimed at increasing your self-confidence, building healthy relationships. It helped me identify adults in my life who have become anchors and helped me succeed. I have watched other students grow and expand their own horizons through Phlight Club and other Project Grad activities. This year, the host of the bi-annual Phlight Club has reached out to me personally asking if I would be interested in hosting the next Phlight Club. I enthusiastically accepted and am in the process of planning the 2018 Spring Phlight Club. This will be a great way for me to reach out to other students and help them recognize the need for anchors in their life. I feel anchors and the

building blocks for success. I adore getting to know other students and their plans for the future. I believe that through hosting the bi-annual Phlight clubs I will have a chance to make an impact on the students, and listen to their own goals for the future. I know that I am still young, but growing up, nothing made me feel more confident than being able to talk about my goals with other like-minded students. I want to be the girl that other kids want to come to and confide in. I know that if I can grow from my adverse childhood experiences, and make my own goals come true that I can help any other kids too.

Not only was the program instrumental in helping me find and realize my goals, I had Jane Beck. She was one of our project leaders. We spent many lunch times together and talked about school and my dreams. If I ever needed anything Jane would always offer to get it for me, from school supplies to snacks. Jane became the rock I needed in my life, she was always there and always willing to help me with school work. Together, the two of us would dream up elaborate future plans for me. With her help I grew more and more confident with myself and my future. With people like Jane Beck in my life, I feel confident in pursuing my goals for a higher education. I want to be that person for other kids when I grow up. As a graduate I know that I will return to help with this program giving back to the group that has given so much to me. I would not be who I am today without them.

I have been empowered by the adversity I have faced and by participating in programs like Project Grad. I am very thankful for the mentors I have had in my life and I know that even after I leave for college I will continue to be a part of Project Grad. It is important to me to help pay forward all that they have given to me, with the hope that I can be an anchor for future

generations. I have surrounded myself with anchors that will help me be the best version of me that I possibly can.