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Hi, my name is Katie. I'm currently a junior in college.

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I am a member of YPR New York which stands for

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Young People in Recovery.

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And it is our effort to transform communities in becoming recovery ready

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and, by recovery, means recovery from drugs or alcoholism.

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We also promote activities for healthy productive lives for young people in or

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seeking recovery.

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We are active around the community, most importantly, doing speaking engagements

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at high schools, middle schools, and also any type of

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activity that promotes recovery.

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I just recently became involved in YPR this past year.

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And at first I was just a support member, and so I came there

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to support people who are in the group. And eventually I just became a member

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and I started actively speaking in high schools.

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And I just took on the role of Education Lead at YPR.

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What I will be doing is hopefully doing more speaking engagements.

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What I've been asked to do on most of my speaking engagements is just talk about my childhood

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and the difficulty of living with a parent who suffers from substance abuse.

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So that's basically what I talk about and then any other additional questions that students may have.

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And what I like to do is also try to educate the youth

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on substance abuse and how it can affect your life and relationships with other people.

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I became very passionate about the issue because of my childhood.

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I grew up with a parent who suffered from substance abuse

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and it was very difficult to not only know that your parent suffered from this

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but to see it happen.

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It was very difficult for me because I had to take on the role of becoming mother

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and doing everything around the house.

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That showed me what substance abuse can really do to a person

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and how it could really hurt a relationship.

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I used those who experiences to become who I am today which is to vow to

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never be involved with substance abuse and never have relationships with people who do those things.

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A big support system that I had was

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my other sisters who were witnessing this as well. And also

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our father, who had become our single parent and guardian and who helped us through a lot.

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I think a really big part of that was also

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getting letters from my mother who was in treatment,

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giving us progress reports on how she's doing

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and telling us about her experiences that she'd been having, and her thoughts.

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And I think that's really important to bring the relationship back together.

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My mom is sober now for about eight to ten years.

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Our relationship has sort of grown

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because now I am in college and I have the education

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and I understand how substance abuse can change a person and change really who they are.

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I think having that knowledge helped our relationship grow

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and helped it become a lot stronger.

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That's a big reason as to why I got involved as well, because

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I watched my mom grow and I watched her start to help others

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after she had recovered.

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That's when I knew I wanted to help others as well.

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I really enjoy, after I speak, having

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students come up to me and ask me questions,

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because that's how I know that they are engaged in what I was saying and that they really want to know.

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It's very rewarding to have a student come up to you and tell you their story and ask for advice.

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I always say, you know, I might not touch everyone in the auditorium

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but if I just get that one person what they needed to hear, then

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I can take from that, and that its the greatest accomplishment I can have.

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I do plan to stay in touch with YPR

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umm, be a member of YPR because I think it helps a lot and I think it's a really great opportunity for the youth.

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And I want to move forward and get my Master's

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in forensic mental health and hopefully go on to get my PhD and work with families

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and help build relationships and help youth suffering with parents' substance abuse.

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The biggest advice I would have for youth that may be in a similar situation is to stay strong.

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That's what I was always told

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was to "stay strong" and to try to help others as much as possible.

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I think that really helped me hearing that.

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There are so many people that are willing to help, whether it be counselors in school,

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your friends, or distant relatives,

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there are always people that you can talk to and there are always people that can help you.

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And its very very important to speak your mind and get out your thoughts and your feelings.

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