

BARIUM SPRINGS &  
GRANDFATHER HOME  
HAVE JOINED FORCES  
UNDER A NEW NAME



**children's hope**  
— ALLIANCE —

# *the* **journey**

Spring/Summer 2017

## **LEARNING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**

TASK has given Alex  
the tools to develop  
healthy relationships

## **WHY TASK?**

an inside look at our  
proprietary program

## **A BED FOR HEATHER**

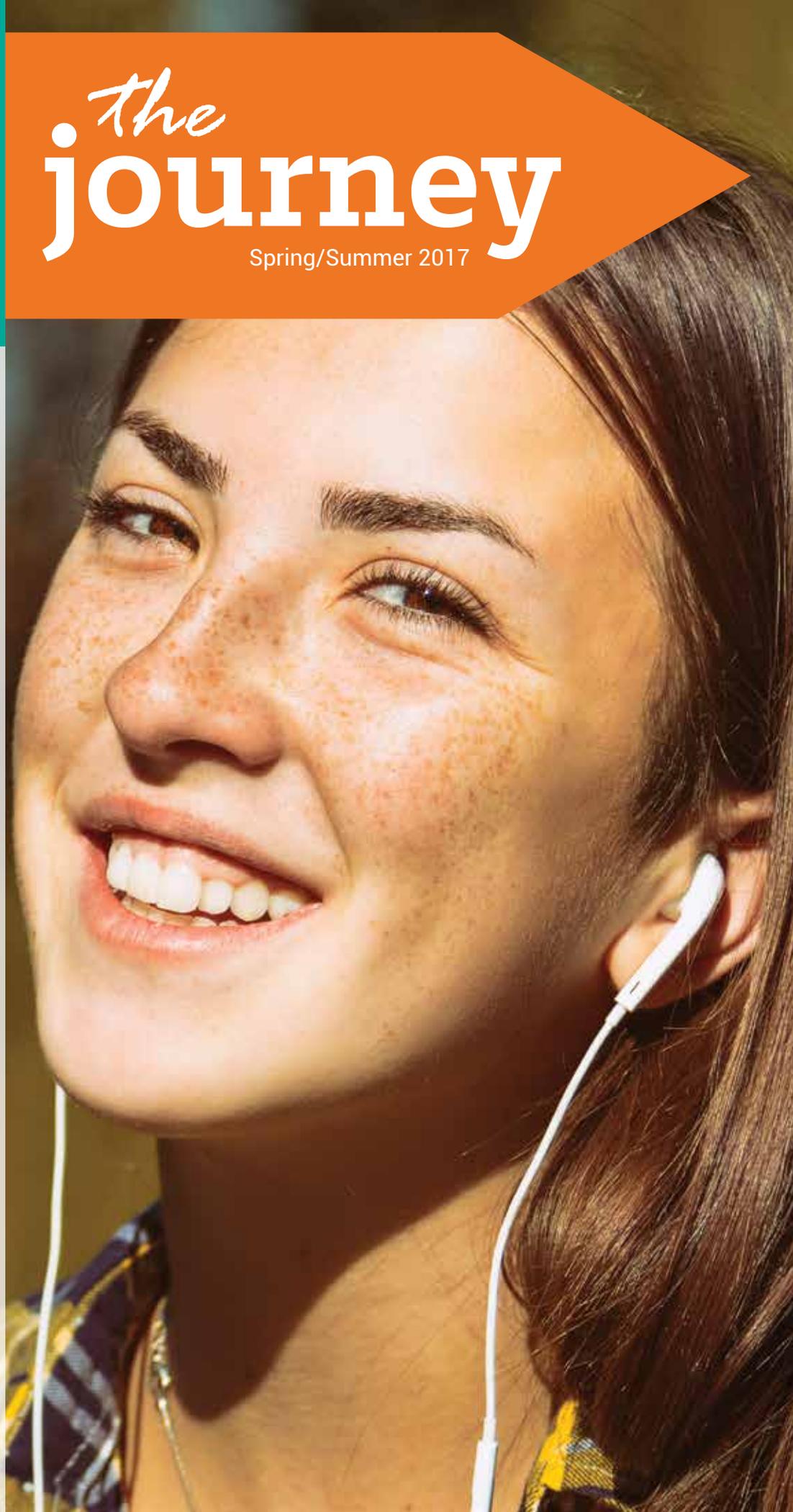
foster care gave  
Heather new hope

## **SUCCESS IS RELATIVE**

success can look  
different for children  
in our care

## **PROCESSING LOSS**

counseling services  
helps Cadence shine





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*Our mission is to provide a safe, healing journey for hurting children and families - creating hope now and in the future.*

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**every journey** is different...  
we're committed to helping children and families along the way

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I love this time of year. After a cold, dreary winter, the warmth of sunshine breaks through, bringing everything back to life. It reminds me of what we do here at Children's Hope Alliance. We provide the opportunity for children and families all across North Carolina to shine, no matter how dreary their pasts may be.

In this issue of *The Journey*, you'll read about Alex (Page 3), who made some bad decisions early in his life, but was given a second chance through our TASK program. You'll also read about Heather (Page 6), who lived in a dark, dreary, filthy home before finding hope with a foster family at Children's Hope Alliance. Later, on Pages 8-10, you'll read about Maggie and Cadence, who were given the opportunity to shine with our residential and counseling services.

At Children's Hope Alliance, we constantly review and improve our programs to ensure we are giving children and families the best care possible. We have nearly 30 specialized programs that are specifically catered to serve children's needs as they change.

I encourage you to take a few minutes to read this newsletter, and see how people like you are helping give children across our state the chance to shine.

Peace,

**John Koppelmeyer, President & CEO**



Child's name and photo have been changed for his protection, but his story is very real.

**MEET ALEX,**  
age 11

# LEARNING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## early exposure to adult material caused Alex to blur the line between fiction and reality

*by :: adam hicks  
& grace watt*

It's normal for 11-year-old boys to be curious about girls, but Alex seemed to keep crossing the lines of safety and social norms. A few girls in his class complained that Alex had inappropriately touched their chests during recess. After he was caught trying to sneak into the girls' bathroom for the third time this school year, the teacher didn't send another note home with him, or call his parents again. Because of his repeat offenses, the school's assistant principal had to suspend Alex from school for two weeks.

### LOOKING FOR HELP

Alex's parents had no idea why he was acting out, and didn't know how to talk to him about his sexualized behaviors. They reached out to Alex's pediatrician for advice. The doctor referred Alex's family to Children's Hope Alliance. Because Alex's behaviors were sexually harmful to others, he was enrolled in our TASK (Treatment Alternatives for Sexualized Kids) program. That meant a therapist would come to Alex's home and meet with him on a regular basis to figure out why he was acting out in a sexual way, and to give him tools to correct his behavior.

The TASK program uses several types of therapy strategies, including individual sessions, family therapy, and group therapy sessions.

### FINDING THE REASON

Even though Alex didn't tell his parents, he was very open with his therapist in their first individual therapy session. He told his therapist that he watched pornographic videos at his friend's house when he would go over there to play. Alex spent a lot of time at that friend's house over the summer, so he was exposed to the explicit videos on several occasions. Alex's developing mind could not distinguish the pornographic videos from reality. The repeated exposure

## What is the goal in responding to youth who cause sexual harm?

The goal of the TASK program is to eliminate sexual reoffending by providing intensive home-based services to youth who have been charged with sexual offenses. By doing so, TASK helps youths and their families. We address risk factors related to non-sexual reoffending as well as sexual reoffending. While treatment is focused on eliminating unwanted behaviors, it is equally committed to strengthening the protective and resiliency factors in a youth and his or her family system in order to promote long-term success.

Sexual harm has a profound impact on individuals, families and communities. TASK provides comprehensive care so that youth who cause sexual harm can lead safe and productive lives in the community. It is important for child advocates, stakeholders, and the general population to understand the current issue with youth who cause sexual harm and the treatment methods available to treat them. As we have said before, through increased awareness and subsequent action, researchers, community members, and treatment providers move towards breaking cycles of abuse.

TASK works in the home. It involves the child's family, and many of the therapy sessions are held in the family's house, where the child will feel the most comfortable. It's another example of how Children's Hope Alliance is innovative and forward-thinking in its programs, so the organization can best serve children's needs as they change.

to pornography warped his sense of healthy relationships – especially with his female classmates.

### MAKING STRIDES

Alex's therapist discovered he expresses himself well through music. At his most recent session, he was talking about a friend who was moving away. He told the therapist he wanted to listen to sad music, so they spent much of the session listening to different songs and talking about why they meant a lot to him. Alex was able to recognize that lines like, "I will miss your touch," were not appropriate, but other lines like, "I will miss the time we spent together," were more relevant for his friendships.

"We believe that long-term success requires clinicians to address challenges in the family system while also highlighting their strengths," says his therapist. She continues, "To help the family better support Alex, we are equipping the family with

language about healthy boundaries in relationships and being able to recognize good touch and bad touch."

### A BRIGHT FUTURE

As treatment comes to an end, Alex's family communicates much better and the parents feel confident in their ability to talk about healthy relationships. Alex and his family are approaching the end of their TASK treatment. His therapist says, "We are excited for their future; a future with more hope and promise that they could have imagined when their son was first exhibiting problematic sexualized behaviors, and they felt at a loss about what to do. When families find themselves in similar situations, our TASK clinicians want to help them find their feet and take strong steps into a new direction."

*Check out the sidebar to the left, and program information on the right to learn more about our TASK program.*





## WHY TASK?

*by :: Tammy Deitz, TASK managing director*

Sexual harm is a topic that is uncomfortable to discuss, especially when it involves juveniles, but sexual harm committed by children and teenagers is a growing problem across the state. Since 2014, North Carolina has seen increasing complaints and charges against youth who have caused sexual harm.

Obviously, if something like that happens, it has a profound impact on individuals, families and communities. Since 1993, Children's Hope Alliance has been working to help support these families and communities with comprehensive care. If handled properly, families and communities will heal, and youth who cause sexual harm can lead safe and productive lives. As Children's Hope Alliance takes its TASK program a step further, the agency has partnered with other clinical professionals and outside

researchers to examine the program and help the agency break cycles of abuse.

These programs focus on the youth's relationships in their community. Our TASK program is an intensive community-based service that includes in-home and outpatient components. It is designed to meet the complex needs of youth who have caused sexual harm by addressing the contextual and development needs of this population.

Out-of-home placements can ensure a youth is removed from a potentially unstable environment for either the youth or the other members of the household. This option breaks up the family unit and moves the youth to an unfamiliar environment. Outpatient and in-home models keep the family unit together and allow the youth to work through the trauma in a familiar

environment when it is safe for all household members.

When looking at bolstering a program, the first thing that comes to mind is 'why?' I met with Buncombe County Department of Juvenile Justice 23 years ago because they were tired of locking up youth who had been formally charged of causing sexual harm. Most of these youth were sent to Youth Development Centers, or what were called "Training Schools" at the time, and often left the facilities with worse behaviors than when they entered.

Seeing the need, we began creating a program that sent clinicians into the youths' homes and worked with the entire family, and keeping the youth in the community. That's one thing I love about this agency. We always strive to be innovative and forward-thinking with our services.

Child's name and photo have been changed for her protection, but her story is very real.

**MEET HEATHER,**  
age 7



# A BED FOR HEATHER

a foster family can be a child's saving grace

*by :: adam hicks*

The day began just like every other day. Heather ran into her classroom just as the tardy bell rang. Her classmates whispered and snickered because her hair was matted and she was wearing the same clothes she had worn all week. When

she laid her bag on the floor, a few cockroaches scurried out, and all the girls in the classroom screamed. Her second grade teacher had been concerned about Heather for a while, but the cockroach sighting was the tipping point. She contacted the school counselor to check in on Heather.

Turns out, the cockroaches and poor hygiene were the least of Heather's troubles.

## **DIGGING DEEPER**

After speaking to Heather, her school counselor contacted the Department of Social Services to investigate Heather's life at home. Heather's par-

ents struggled with substance abuse, and cared more about feeding their addiction than their child. Sometimes, the only meal Heather would have would be the free lunch provided to her by her school. Her parents spent all their money trying to reach their next high instead of buying Heather the basic necessities every child needs. When it was time to sleep, Heather didn't hop into her bed like most 7-year-olds. Heather's parents didn't buy her a bed. She would just curl up on top of a pile of dirty laundry on the cold floor. Heather's home was also infested with cockroaches, and because Heather had to sleep on the floor, she would wake up throughout the night to knock the bugs off her. Heather told the social worker that she even felt them crawling on her face a few times, so she fashioned a makeshift mask from a piece of mesh and tightened it around her neck with a belt to keep the roaches from crawling on her face while she slept. Sleeping all night with the mesh mask tangled and matted her hair.

### A SAFE HOME

After the investigation, the Department of Social Services removed Heather from the home. She was then placed with a foster family at Children's Hope Alliance. The transition to her new foster family wasn't easy for Heather because despite her parents' substance abuse issues and neglect, she still loved them. She wanted to go home. "It used to break my heart," said her new foster mother. "Know-

ing where she came from, and hearing her talk about how much she wanted to go back. That environment was all Heather knew."

"I'll never forget when we first showed her the bedroom she'd be sleeping in," said her foster father. "She glanced at us with her head cocked to the side and a strange look in her eyes. She asked, 'Is that bed for me?' Heather came to us on a Friday, and I think she slept most of that whole weekend. You could tell she was exhausted."

It didn't take long for Heather to warm up to her foster family and new foster home. She knew she could count on three meals per day – along with snacks – and she could finally sleep without worrying about bugs crawling all over her.

"I could tell an immediate difference in Heather," said her teacher. "The first week she was in her foster home she was so much cleaner and she looked well-rested for the first time this school year. She

was still quiet, though. It took a couple more weeks, but she really started engaging with her classmates. She used to get picked on, and she was very standoffish, but over the last month or so, she's really become a classroom leader."

Heather has been with her foster family for five months now, and the goal is for her to return home with her parents, when they are ready. Over the past few months, Children's Hope Alliance has helped connect Heather's parents to substance abuse services to help them move past their drug issues. They are also enrolled in parenting support classes to help teach them how to take care of Heather.

"I'm really happy to be living with my foster family and have a warm bed," Said Heather. "But I am looking forward to going back to my mom and dad's house when their ready. I hope one day I will have my own bed in my own house with own mom and dad."

### MYTH BUSTED!

When it comes to fostering a child, there are lots of myths out there that simply aren't true. Here are a few of the biggest ::

**Myth:** I am not married. A single person can't be a foster parent.

**Fact:** You don't have to be married to be a foster parent.

**Myth:** I can't be a foster parent because I don't own my own home.

**Fact:** You actually don't have to be a homeowner to foster. Many of our foster parents rent their homes.

**Myth:** It's too much pressure to foster a child. I can't do it alone.

**Fact:** If you foster with Children's Hope Alliance, you're never on the journey alone. We have 24/7 on-call staff to help anytime you need us.

To bust more well-known myths about being a foster parent, visit [www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org/fostermyths](http://www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org/fostermyths) today!

# SUCCESS IS RELATIVE

## success can have very different meanings for different children

by :: *april hartzog*

Success is a very fluid and individual concept for the children who live on the residential campuses of Children's Hope Alliance. For most teens, success is about good grades, making the team, or earning that driver's license. For a teen living at one of our group homes, success means opening up to a therapist about painful experiences, going a certain number of days without harming yourself, and sometimes success means realizing you do need help.

Success came slowly for Maggie. She was small for her age, developmentally behind, and at 13 years old, was the youngest girl living in her cottage. Maggie had thick, plastic glasses that made her deep brown eyes pop even more. She was childlike and very friendly. She had also experienced a tremendous amount of pain.

### **ABUSED AND ABUSING**

When Maggie was younger, her mother struggled with drug addictions and prostituted to pay for her destructive habits. While her mom was gone, which was more often than not, Maggie and her younger sister

stayed with an uncle down the street. Her uncle was a hoarder so the home was covered in old boxes, newspapers, mason jars and other items. An older, male cousin lived in the home, and anytime Maggie came over, he would find a way to get her alone and molest her. This abuse went on routinely for four years. Maggie was so young at the time, she didn't realize what was happening was wrong. It made her feel bad, but she just thought that was how people interacted. After a while, she began doing the same things to her little sister.

When Maggie turned 12, her uncle's home caught fire. When the local law enforcement saw the deplorable conditions of the home, they contacted the Department of Social Services and Maggie and her sister were placed in a foster home. Soon the foster parents realized that Maggie was molesting her sister. Maggie was removed from the home and brought to live in one of our group homes.

### **LIFE IN A GROUP HOME**

An important part of healing is acceptance. One of the first steps in recovery for our children is the ability to acknowledge the things that have been

done to them, as well as the things they have done. Maggie really struggled with that concept. On the outside, she was very bubbly and bright, but in therapy she would be withdrawn and hesitant to talk about her past. Her therapist encouraged Maggie to open up and actively start working on her treatment, but Maggie's reluctance persisted.

### **A TURNING POINT**

One day there was a change. Maggie struggled in school, she had a defiant attitude with her teachers and was very sullen and angry. When her staff came

Child's name and photo have been changed for her protection, but her story is very real.

**MEET MAGGIE,**

age 13



## A VALENTINE FROM A TEEN IN OUR CARE ::

Children living at Grandfather Home campus in Banner Elk made Valentine's Day cards for residents at a local nursing home. One girl wanted to take her card making a step further and make a card for staff.

This young lady has been in a group home at our Grandfather Home campus for several months, but will soon be transferring to live at our Barium Springs campus in Statesville. Usually, moving is a very difficult process for children in residential care, but because both the Grandfather Home and Barium Springs campuses are part of Children's Hope Alliance, if children move from one campus to another, they will still see many of the same staff members, and even keep their case manager.

This young lady was scheduled to move from Grandfather Home to Barium Springs in late February. Every time employees working at the Barium Springs campus visited the Grandfather Home campus, they would be sure to stop and introduce themselves to her, so she would make sure to recognize plenty of friendly faces when she moved to Barium Springs. Needless to say, the outpouring of support from both campuses made an impact on this young lady.

This is just the latest example of how Barium Springs and Grandfather Home coming together to form Children's Hope Alliance is having a positive affect on children and families across North Carolina.

to pick her up, they questioned her about it, but she exploded into tears and ran away. The staff found her a few minutes later curled into a tight ball on the back steps of the cottage. Her little shoulders shaking with the force of her sobs. The staff sat beside her, patiently waiting for her to respond. Finally, Maggie turned to the staff, her eyes red with exhaustion and said "My case worker told me my sister is being adopted by a family in another state... what if... what if I never see her again... what if she never forgives me." Maggie's staff continued to comfort her. They

told her that being adopted was a good thing for her sister, that one day if Maggie continued to work on her treatment, they were sure everything would work out. Maggie slowly sat up, wiped her tears on the cuff of her sleeve and said, "I think I'm ready to talk to my therapist now."

That was a first step toward healing. That was a successful day for Maggie.

*Children's Hope Alliance has group homes in four locations throughout North Carolina :: Bryson City, Banner Elk, Wilkesboro, and Statesville.*



Don't let distance keep you from getting first-class care.

Children's Hope Alliance continues adapting its services to meet the needs of children and families across North Carolina. As one of the state's oldest and most trusted child welfare agencies, we offer telepsychiatry (similar to Skype & FaceTime) to help connect patients to the highest quality of care.

This service provides quicker response to emergency needs, and reduces wait times for psychiatric appointments. It uses two-way, real time interactive audio and video technology to connect patients to their healthcare provider.

Patients can schedule an appointment at one of our many Counseling Centers in North Carolina and be connected with healthcare providers at our other locations through video conference.



To connect with or enroll in our Outpatient Therapeutic Services, call 1-844-226-8855 or visit [www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org](http://www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org) for a comprehensive list of services.

# PROCESSING LOSS

growing up is hard - especially when you experience a close loss

by :: *april hartzog*

Cadence and Mya grew up together, and enjoyed all the fun a childhood should offer; tea parties, sleep overs, dress up. Those memories faded as the pair entered middle school. That's a tough transition for most children. The middle school in their county was set up to accommodate children from different, smaller elementary schools, so the environment was bigger and more stressful than what they were used to. Cadence adjusted quickly. She had always been more social and outgoing. Mya,

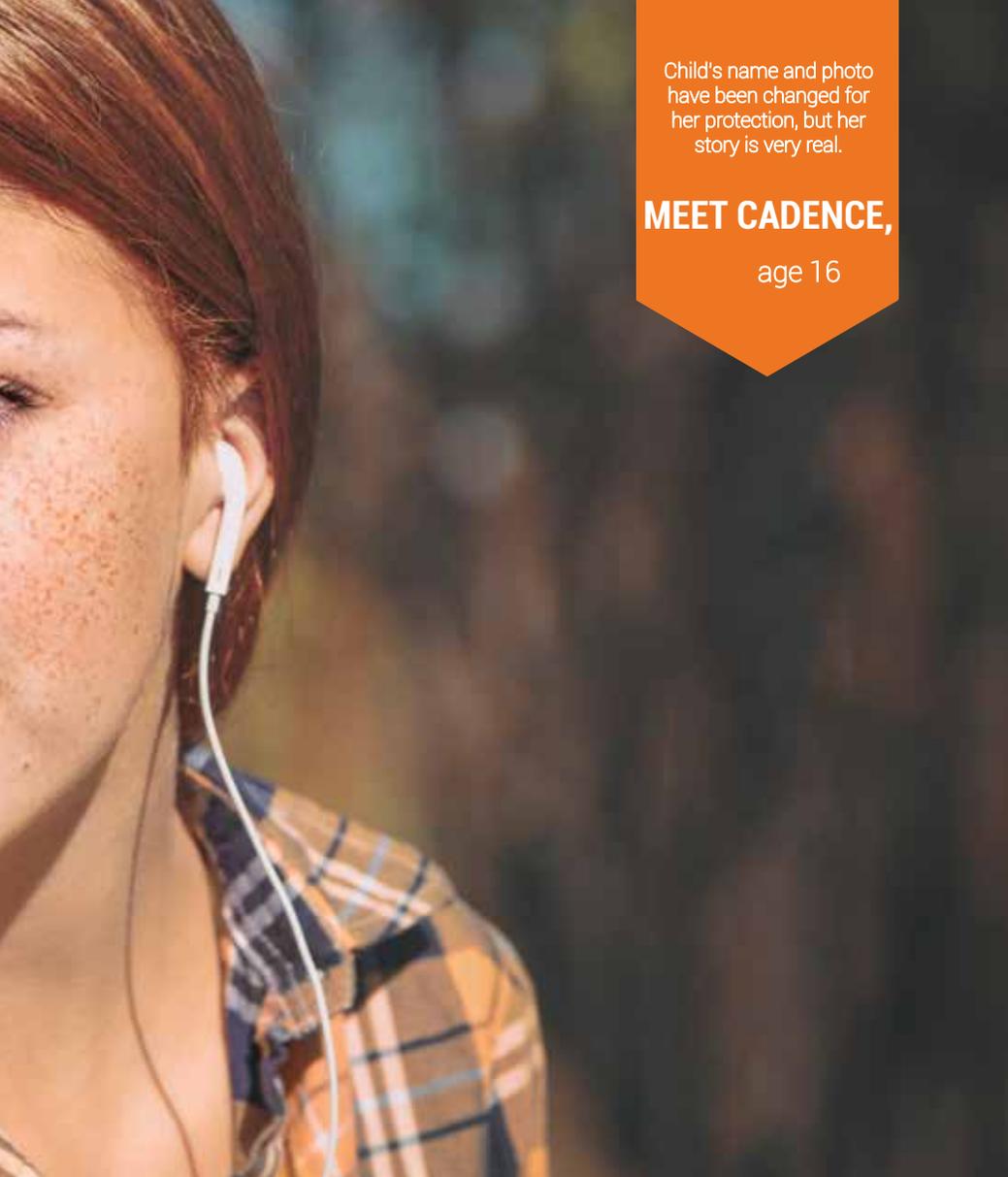
on the other hand, struggled to make new friends.

## GROWING APART

Cadence and Mya didn't see much of each other. The two were in separate classes, and Cadence had joined the basketball team so she was always busy after school. When she did run into Mya, she seemed distant and kind of sad, but Cadence figured Mya would adjust to life in middle school.

Cadence knew Mya was getting picked on and had heard several of the girls on the basketball team talk about her "ugly"





Child's name and photo have been changed for her protection, but her story is very real.

## MEET CADENCE, age 16

clothes and hair. Cadence didn't join in on the teasing, but she didn't speak up for her childhood friend either, she didn't want to risk her new found popularity.

### LIFE-CHANGING NEWS

One rainy February afternoon, Cadence arrived home after practice to her mom and dad sitting in the dimly lit kitchen, their eyes were red and they were acting strange. Cadence's mom cried as she told her the news – Mya had committed suicide the evening before.

"It felt like the room was spin-

ning," Cadence recalls, "I'd never had anyone I know die before, and then I hear that my best friend is gone, it was horrible. An absolute nightmare."

**"I felt like I had caused it ... that made my heart break even more."**

**-- Cadence**

### A DARK PLACE

After the funeral, Cadence changed. She stopped going to basketball practice, she stopped washing her hair, she only wore baggy clothes and she would hardly eat. Her parents were worried. They knew

Cadence needed to grieve, but were worried that she may need more support than they could give her. One day, Cadence fainted at school because she hadn't eaten in days. That's when a counselor suggested her parents look into outpatient therapy at Children's Hope Alliance.

### A GLIMMER OF HOPE

Cadence started weekly counseling sessions at Children's Hope Alliance. Her family knew it was a good fit right away. "The staff were so supportive and caring, we knew from that first meeting, they could help our daughter," says Cadence's mother.

Cadence wasn't so sure at first. "I was mad! I thought by putting me in therapy, my parents thought I was crazy." It took several sessions with a therapist but eventually Cadence realized it felt good to have someone different to talk to. "They helped me realize Mya's death wasn't my fault; I can't go back and change it, but I can change the future because of it."

Cadence recently started an "Anti-Bullying" club at her school so kids who are feeling bullied can have a place to find support. She also got permission from her school to plant a tree on the ground in memory of Mya. "I still miss her, a lot, and there are days when I start to feel guilty again, but then I remember all the help and tools my therapist gave me so I keep going on."

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UNDER A NEW NAME



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*Check out our new  
name and logo!*



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## Parenting is hard. *We're here to help.*

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