

International Association for Learning Alternatives
Success Stories

FUTURE'S ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

by Savannah Johnson

Many people have poor opinions about alternative schools. Some people think that if you can't make it in a normal high school, you can't make it in the real world. Some think that they are for druggies and the "bad kids". Future's Alternative High School isn't like that, and I bet most schools aren't. We have about thirty students, and none of them are bad kids. For the most part, everyone gets along. In a small school like this, people are able to get closer to others. We can connect with our teachers. We have a counselor that we can talk to, and almost everyone takes advantage of this privilege often.

When I first heard about Future's, I was shocked that my counselor would suggest I drop out of the high school and go to a "drop-out school". Luckily for me, I listened when he explained what it was really like and told me how much better I would do there. It sounded wonderful to me. It was the type of environment I thrive in. Convincing my parents was a lot harder. My mom refused to listen to me for weeks about it. She had heard all the stereotypes about it and was adamant about me never going there. She even threatened to kick me out if I went.

I've now been coming here for over, a year, and I love it. My mother feels terrible whenever she remembers how she judged this school and others like it without looking into it first. I do better here because I can work at my own pace. I feel I learn more than I did at the high school, because here you can't "fall through the cracks." You have to have at least a "B" on each assignment. A "B" means that you understand things better than if you only got a "D", which is all that is required at a normal high school.

It's a very comfortable setting. We don't have power struggles or students acting high and mighty. It's kind of like a family. When someone is having trouble, we all try to help out. We help each other with homework, family trouble, and relationships. Future's isn't just a place we go to learn. It's a place where we can grow.

My Future

By Lindsay Treadway

Everyday I woke up not wanting to go to school. I would get physically sick because I was so scared to see what my day would be like. Almost everyday I was tortured by the other kids in the school: Pushing me in the hall, pushing me down the stairs, putting me down, and treating me like crap. I put up with it for 17 years and I was not going to put up with it anymore.

I started telling my parents that I was not going to go to school. I said that I was past the age that I could legally drop out on my own without their permission. My dad was really against the idea that I wanted to go to Futures to finish my high school career. I could not stand another day at the regular high school. Everyone hurt me too much and I had no

friends. I felt helpless and alone. The thought of dropping out was still hard for me though. I was a cheerleader, in band, chorus, drama, SADD, peer helpers, art club and almost any other activity that I could think of. Even being in those groups I was still put down. I didn't fit in. I was not a prep because I didn't have the clothes. I wasn't a dirt-bag because I didn't do drugs or smoke. I was in the middle.

I started thinking about my future if I stayed at the high school. I would not pass hardly any of my classes because I could not concentrate on my work. I would have the students making my life miserable. I had 3 choices: Drop out and never continue my education, drop out and go to Futures to graduate from high school, or I could try to put up with all the hell that was going on at school.

I chose to go to Futures because I wanted to have a high school diploma. I had to drop out for over a month. It was the best thing that could ever happen to me. I got in touch with myself. I learned a lot about myself in those lonely weeks at home by myself. On my first day at Futures, I felt great. I was able to do my work and didn't have to worry about anything that had happened at the high school. It was like a new beginning. I now get along with everyone and can do my work on my own. I am passing and I feel good about myself. It is like a big family here. I love my decision. I am glad I took a chance and that my parents finally agreed with me and have stood by me all the way. They are happy now because I am finally happy. I can still be in cheerleading, but I sacrificed everything else. It was worth it.

Testimonials - 04/12/02

by Tracy Deal

Why go to an alternative school? Actually, I should first ask, why shouldn't you go to an alternative school? You shouldn't go to an alternative school if you think it will be easy, or you think you can slack off, or you have built up the idea that you won't have to do anything but goof off and get away with it. Please, if this is your idea, I ask you to invest your time in something else, because we here at Future are a group of intellects with many talents, dreams, and positive goals. We are a group of students, not a group of dropouts as some people, who don't have a clue what we do here, may call us. We have all come here for different reasons, but we are all still here for the same reason, to graduate from high school, and to become a valuable addition to our community and society.

It has been said by many that all people are wired differently, and I truly believe this. Not all people can sit in a classroom of 30 and maintain a constant attention span to the same monotone teacher without losing interest and getting bored to the point of factual numbness.

Another issue that existed for many of us was criticism. It's pretty hard to sit in a classroom of 30 and pay attention while the teacher talks as the kids behind you are pointing and laughing, and the ones in front of you are giving you dirty looks. Pretty soon you are afraid to raise your hand and ask questions. When they call on you for an answer,

you are afraid to speak, and you do not have the freedom to express yourself. When you are recognized as an outcast, you become the outcast. We have to be strong enough to believe that all of the criticism that was received is based on the curiosity about the unique personality traits, and talents that each one of us holds.

Here at Futures everyone treats each other with common decency and respect. Even if you can't stand someone and their views of life, you still treat them as the human-being that they are, because that's life. I feel a hundred times more comfortable to express myself in the Futures setting, rather than a regular high school. By expressing ourselves we are creative, then imagination thrives, and motivation prevails.

We are a school of unique individuals, with developing personalities, who have proven to be devoted to not giving up on ourselves. We treat each other casually by calling everyone by their first names. This makes me feel more comfortable and relaxed with my surroundings. I feel like Futures is part mine, and that feeling creates confidence and pride. I can work with Futures and Futures will work for me. Because of Futures I am relaxed enough to shape and grow into the person that I am, and always wanted to be. Everyone at Futures is here because they want to be, not because they have to be.