



A Chance To Choose program is the right choice for troubled youth

Chelsea moved out at the age of 16 to escape an unsafe home environment. She started skipping school, hanging out with the wrong crowd and began taking drugs and alcohol to escape the reality of her troubled teenage life. Not able to find a job and unable to turn to her family for support Chelsea met with a guidance counsellor who told her about A Chance To Choose Youth Program. In the program Chelsea learned how to create a resume and to communicate with others in a clear and effective manner. Chelsea said “without the public speaking course I don’t think I would have been able to speak at my graduation as I have a hard time talking to big groups.” Her most memorable moment in A Chance To Choose program was a visit to the Vancouver Aquarium in Stanley Park where she took part in a scavenger hunt with a group of teens also involved in the program. Not only did she develop the skills needed to find employment but she also developed new friendships as she excitedly added “the other kids in the program are now some of my closest friends.”

Now 18 years old and currently upgrading to complete her diploma, Chelsea works part-time at a shoe store and lives with her best friend also named Chelsey. Chelsea says “without the help of my guidance counsellor and the staff and volunteers at A Chance To Choose and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. I would probably



still be hanging out with the wrong crowd and getting into trouble, but now I work and help my friend raise her baby and look forward to studying to become a drug and alcohol counsellor.”

Chelsea plans to attend Douglas College after she completes her high school diploma and then apply to the psychology program at Simon Fraser University. She hopes to become a drug and alcohol counsellor where she will broaden her focus on the effects of drug and alcohol addiction on the entire family especially children.

A chance is what Chelsea needed. A chance to get out of an unsafe home environment, and a chance to learn skills and receive training to improve her life. Chelsea was given that opportunity thanks to A Chance To Choose Youth Program provided by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and funded by the Government of Canada’s Youth Employment Strategy. A Chance To Choose helps troubled youth living in the Tri-Cities and the Downtown Eastside by providing a safe learning environment where they can develop essential employability skills such as; oral communications, document use, reading text, working with others, thinking skills, writing, computer use and continuous learning.

A Chance To Choose program is currently serving in Port Moody. The Vancouver location was launched in March 2008 in the Downtown Eastside but was stopped due to funding termination in March 2009. Because of funding cuts many youth living in the Downtown Eastside will lose their chance to return to a normal life. The S.U.C.C.E.S.S.’ A Chance To Choose Program is a necessary investment for the future of our communities and our economy. Without this program there will be limited opportunity for troubled youth to grow and develop their personal and professional skills needed for a better life. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. hopes that funding for A Chance To Choose in the Downtown Eastside will be re-established as it is critical to the improvement of the DTES community and its future.

For more information visit www.success.bc.ca or contact Eileen Lao at eileen.lao@success.bc.ca