

GOOD KIDS, BAD HABITS

DRUGS LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT ON THE SCHOOL

BY SAM STRAESSLE

SLAVERY IS THRIVING IN THE COUNTRY today. More and more people are increasingly becoming slaves to a little white pill.

Not even the oasis that the school tries to provide can protect its students from this drug epidemic. Mr. Steve Straessle said, "It has been a problem for a while, but we noticed a spike in Little Rock in heavy drug use. We are a school that is tragically normal in terms of drug use among students, and for a school to bury its head in the sand and pretend it's not there would be counterproductive and dangerous for the kids. The most important thing we do is interact with students and parents on a personal level. We have found that drug abuse is usually a symptom of a larger problem such a depression, trauma, or neglect."

The school's family encompasses both the students and faculty, and when a student needs help, he has the full support of his family behind him.

Mr. Paul Spencer said, "The thing I really like about this job, my favorite thing, is that when we refer to our classes, we don't say, 'My government class did this,' or 'My history class did this.' We say, 'My boys did this.' It's not even a conscious thing because after a while 'the boys' become 'your boys,' and you get defensive of them and protective of them, and you try to run interference as best you can, but clearly you know, you can't always do that."

The threat of drugs is a truly monstrous entity that can affect any person at any time. Drew Tubbs, Class of '06, is a prime example that drugs don't care who you are or what sports you play. Drugs want constant attention from the user.

Mr. Tubbs said, "The negative impacts

that drugs had on me and my life number a list longer than you or I could ever see. Because there are so many, I'm just going to list the main points. There are five main categories that cover most of the impacted areas. These areas consist of legal, financial, mental, physical, and social impacts that drugs had on me. My legal impacts are that I am a felon. This means that I can no longer vote nor can I have any type of gun. My financial impacts consisted of several thousand dollars in legal fees, all my personal funds spent on drugs, and now that I'm a felon, my job opportunities are very limited.

"The mental impacts consist of a level of maturity not progressing, the hold that drugs had on my thinking process, and suicidal thoughts. I also used drugs to hide my feelings, so when I did finally get clean, I had countless issues to face. Physical impacts consist of my teeth weakening due to intravenous drug use, liver damage, heart rate, and blood pressure issues. Also, when coming off many drugs, there is a process called withdrawals that a drug user's body must undergo. For me this consisted of vomiting blood as well as anything I tried to eat or drink, and dehydration, diarrhea, cold and hot sweats, restless body limbs, nausea, and cramps. The social impact is basically the way society views me, which is almost always in a negative light."

Mr. Tubbs had to endure the grueling battle from addiction to recovery that would test any man's will to survive. Mr. Tubbs said, "The main positive that came from my drug use was recovery. By recovery, I mean every step I took, every place I went, and every person I met that contributed to me getting

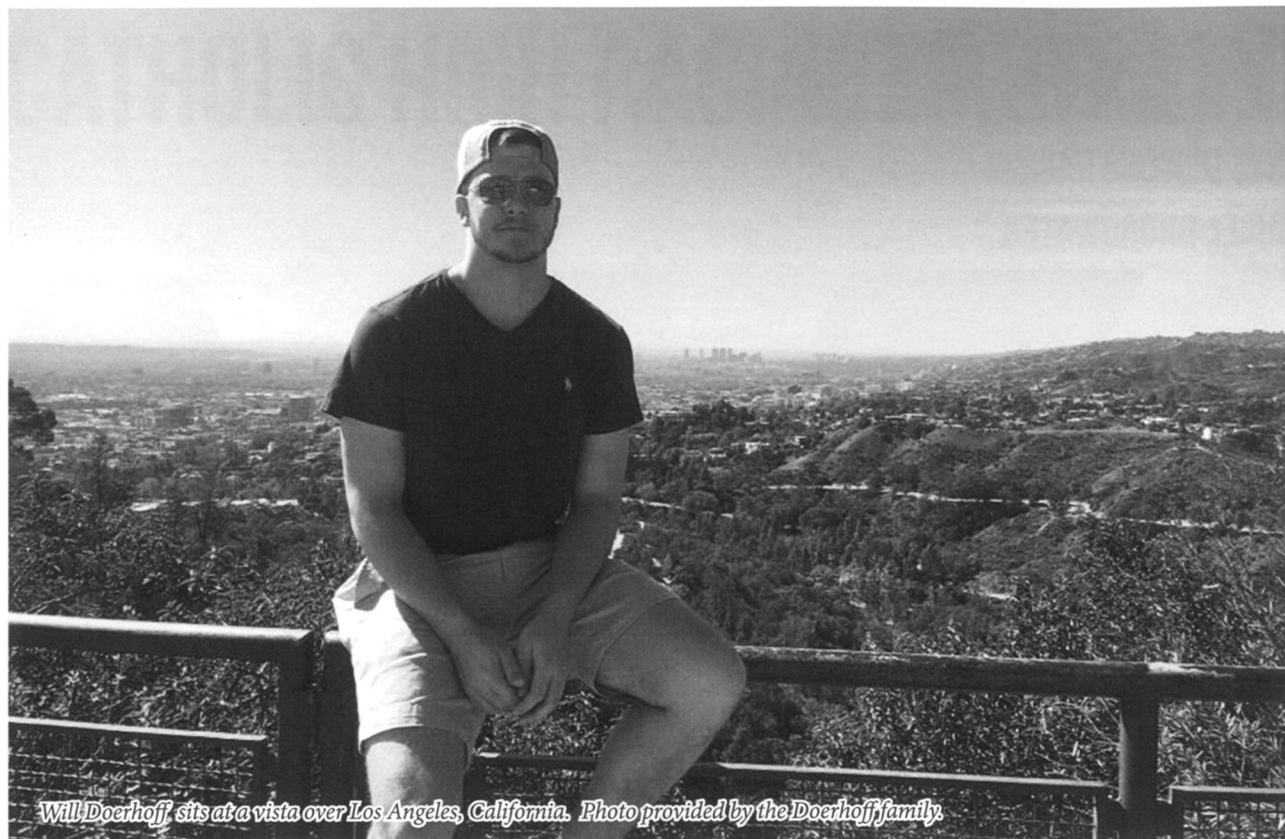
clean and sober. These steps are a basic foundation from which a normal person's life is based. The places I went include rehabilitation centers, halfway houses, and AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] and NA [Narcotics Anonymous] meetings. These places will always be a safety [net] for me. These are places I can go to get help if I need it or if I just need to talk to friend. Finally, the last positive is the people I met and continue to meet in this incredible revolution we call recovery. The people are the backbone of recovery."

Will Doerhoff, Class of '14, was, by all accounts, an exceptional human being. He was a fantastic student, the president of REACH, and just a good person all-around, but he had one flaw that proved to be fatal: he yielded to the temptation that coincides to every drug.

Mr. Spencer said, "When you teach, you get to know the boys pretty well, and you look at kids and tend to develop an opinion of them over time. Unfortunately, there are some kids that you can see have outward signs that the kid has trouble with home life or problems with drugs or alcohol, and unfortunately, you can look at a kid and think 'that kid's going to be in jail or end up in trouble with drugs.' To an extent, you can pick them out, but Will was not one of those boys. I had absolutely no reason to believe that we would ever be having this discussion."

Nick Doerhoff, brother of Will, said,

**"IT'S JUST NOT WORTH RUINING YOUR LIFE OVER A JOINT OR A PILL. I COULD HAVE HAD IT ALL."
-DREW TUBBS**



Will Doerhoff sits at a vista over Los Angeles, California. Photo provided by the Doerhoff family.

"I knew Will was using drugs, but I did not know how severe it was. I thought all he was doing was smoking pot and I didn't think it was a big deal. I should have told someone. There were many warning signs. Will would take forever to come home from work and we lived very close by it. He would steal large amounts of money from my parents in cash. He was also very aggressive because he would try to quit and go through withdrawals."

Drugs not only affect the user, but also his family and community. Mr. Spencer said, "I remember when [Will] was here the last time towards the end of last school year and it was after he was out of rehab. Will always had this look when he was a student where he would wink his eye a little bit and put his head down and say 'Yes sir, Mr. Spencer' in kind of a mischievous way."

"I remember speaking to him the last time I saw him and I told him, 'Will I was absolutely floored when I heard this about you, and I've always been so proud of you for your work in the class, and being so personable, and just being such a good kid, but I've never been more proud of you for facing this prob-

lem and talking about it.' He was on his way down the hall when I said that, and he kind of turned around and made that same 'Yes sir, Mr. Spencer' kind of gesture like I had been accustomed to. If I would've known he was to go back into crucible, I would've tackled him. I had no reason to believe that was the last time I was going to see him. Now, I open my classroom door and every time I turn to the right I can see him walking down to the main staircase."

Mr. Tubbs said, "The advice I would give to a high school student, with respect to drugs, would be to not do them. Don't be around them and don't be around the people who use them. It's just not worth ruining your life over a joint or a pill. I could have had it all. I could have had the education, job, the house, the car, and the vacation home on some tropical island, but no, I decided I was going to use drugs instead of living the dream life. I don't know where I would be now if hadn't ever used drugs."

"What I can say is that my life would have been so much easier than it is now. If I could go back in time, I would tell myself to stay away from the alcohol

and drugs, work hard in school, go play football in college, finish college, and don't miss out on life so you can slowly kill yourself by using drugs. Fun can be had without drugs and alcohol."

Nick Doerhoff bravely said on the announcements the following Monday after his brother's death that Will won't see him turn 16 or graduate from high school. This powerful message should bring all people to the realization that drugs can affect anyone.

Nick said, "My advice to a person who suspects his family member or friend who is experimenting with drugs is to talk to their parents or a teacher. They need to get help, even if it is not out of control. What starts simple can spiral out of control just like that. If you get them help, this will assist them in kicking their addiction. All it takes is one time for you to overdose. I am going to honor Will's name by informing people how deadly these drugs are."

"Pot turns to pills, pills turn to heroin, and heroin leads to death. I am going to strive to serve my school, my community, and country as Will has." ✦