

My name is Tiava Anderson and I am 17 years old. I am going to tell you a little bit about the journey that led me here today. Looking back I remember starting to struggle in school at the age of 9. My teacher would yell at me when I didn't understand something and I began to think differently about adults and I started not to trust them. School became really hard for me so I started to skip all the time. My mom wanted me to be in school and that caused us to argue a lot. By 7<sup>th</sup> grade I was drinking and smoking weed and at that point I completely dropped out of middle school.

After dropping out, I started hanging out with really unhealthy people. I started using meth when I was 14. I felt I had no future and that I was going nowhere with my life. Looking back on that time now, it is really hard for me to even believe how awful things were for me. I mean it was bad! Who would think it could get any worse? but it did. By 15 I would use anything I could get my hands on. I stopped coming home most of the time and was making really dangerous choices. I wanted to get clean and I tried to do it on my own, but then I started drinking again. I just couldn't get it together.

I finally got caught and ended up having to deal with the Clackamas County Juvenile Department, which I will now tell you saved my life. I went to a residential treatment program which helped me learn skills, manage my behavior and took me out of my environment so I could get clean. This opportunity was like a reset button for me and I came back out in a healthy state of mind.

After residential I was given the chance to work for GREEN Corps. I would describe my experience with GREEN Corps as an opportunity for me to see my own value and learn how much potential I truly have. GREEN Corps taught me accountability, communication skills, how to resolve conflict in a healthy way, leadership, and that I am an important part of my community. GREEN Corps helped me gain trust for adults as well as developing healthy and supportive relationships with my peers. All of that and I now have a FABULOUS resume, letters of recommendation and a PRETTY AMAZING portfolio that shows people what I can AND have accomplished.

Wow, right? That girl, became this girl! I can truly say I am AWESOME! I am confident, I am a great friend, I am responsible, I am a good role model to my little sister and a good daughter to my mother. I feel like I have my life back. I was on track to get my GED, but I have decided to go back to high school and graduate. I want to go to college for cosmetology. I went from having no future to one that looks bright and healthy.

Without the opportunities I had in both residential treatment and GREEN Corps I wouldn't be standing here in front of you. I don't ACTUALLY want to think about where I might be. It is important to me that these programs continue to be funded and that other kids have a chance to start over. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of y'all.