

Holloway maintains healthy lifestyle without drugs and alcohol

By: Neal A. Johnson | Source: Unterrified Democrat

November's Osage County Anti-Drug Community Action Team (OC-ADCAT) Student of the Month, Chamois senior Kael Holloway, said living a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle is important because it helps him succeed.

"I've seen alcohol and drugs having very negative effects on people's lives, and I don't want to risk who I can be or who I am," he said. "I also care about my mental and physical health a lot, and living drug and alcohol-free is very healthy."

His mother, Jessica Gerloff, and father, Joe Rost, instilled his beliefs at a very young age. "My mom had always told me about the harmful effects of drug and alcohol use and that it was just better for myself and others if I stayed away from them," said Holloway. "While growing up, I found myself avoiding situations that involved drugs or alcohol. I understood those were things I didn't like being around. A few years ago, my family experienced the loss of multiple loved ones in a very short time. Some of my family and friends turned to alcohol to deal with the loss. Seeing them struggle with alcohol abuse pushed me further away from it, and it helped me understand not only the physical toll it can have on a person but also the mental toll."

Counselor Meghan Birmingham is pleased to nominate Holloway. "Kael has taken the lead on helping promote a healthy lifestyle and striving for high academic achievements," said Birmingham.

Principal Jeremy McKague agrees, noting that Holloway has attended Boy's State, participated in different clubs and activities, and helps fellow students strive for academic excellence. "Kael puts in a tremendous amount of effort to live a drug-free and healthy life. He not only holds himself to high academic standards but promotes it among all the students," McKague said.

Not all classmates agree. "I often experience peer pressure to attend parties, and I handle it by deciding to go or not by myself," Holloway said. "I'll go if I want to, but I will refrain from drinking; if the party gets too crazy for my liking, I'll just leave. I like to go out with my friends, and I like big social events with a lot of people, but big parties that contain a lot of drinking and an overall negative environment just don't interest me, so I'd rather stay home."

Holloway is a member of FFA, FBLA, and Mass Media and serves as class vice president. He also works at Daves Pizza and Wings, where he is a manager.

"Kael has shown great leadership skills throughout his school career," said Birmingham. "Outside of school, he is also a hard worker. He is extremely into his health and making healthy decisions in everything he does."

Perhaps his most significant decision is to maintain a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle. "It's very easy for me because one of my biggest hobbies is working out and caring about my health," said Holloway. "I also care about my future, and to me, things like alcohol and drugs can distract me from school and my college preparation, and I don't want to risk messing that stuff up. My circle of friends involves very kind and nice people, and even if some of them drink at parties, they never try to pressure me into drinking because they understand and respect my decision."

My family is also supportive of my decision. My mom and my sister often talk about how they are proud of the decisions I make, and that helps me keep pushing forward.”

Birmingham also noted that Holloway takes time every day to tutor younger students, and with a GPA of 4.0, he is near the top of his class.

“He is extremely bright and very studious,” said Birmingham. “He cares about his grades and getting into a good college.”

After high school, Holloway plans to attend either State Tech for two years for an associate in electrical engineering and then continue to the Missouri University of Science & Technology (MUST) for a bachelor’s degree or might go to S&T all four years. “While I attend college, I plan to try to make as much money as I can to prepare for life after school while also staying in touch with my family and close friends,” said Holloway. “While I’m off at college, I want to prioritize spending time with my little sister, Demi Holloway, and my older sister, Chloe Holloway, as they mean the world to me. I would also like to spend as much time as I can with my three stepbrothers, Austin Bradley, Matthew Bradley, and John Bradley.”

OC-ADCAT Executive Director Lorie Winslow will present Holloway with a certificate, and he will be eligible to apply for the annual Student of the Month Scholarship.

“I am so excited to showcase our seniors who have chosen to live a drug- and alcohol-free life,” said OC-ADCAT Education Committee Chairperson Charlotte Bellsmith. “I know this is not an easy thing to do. The pressure on our teens to drink while still underage is still pretty severe.”

For more information about OC-ADCAT, visit <https://www.ocadcat.org>.