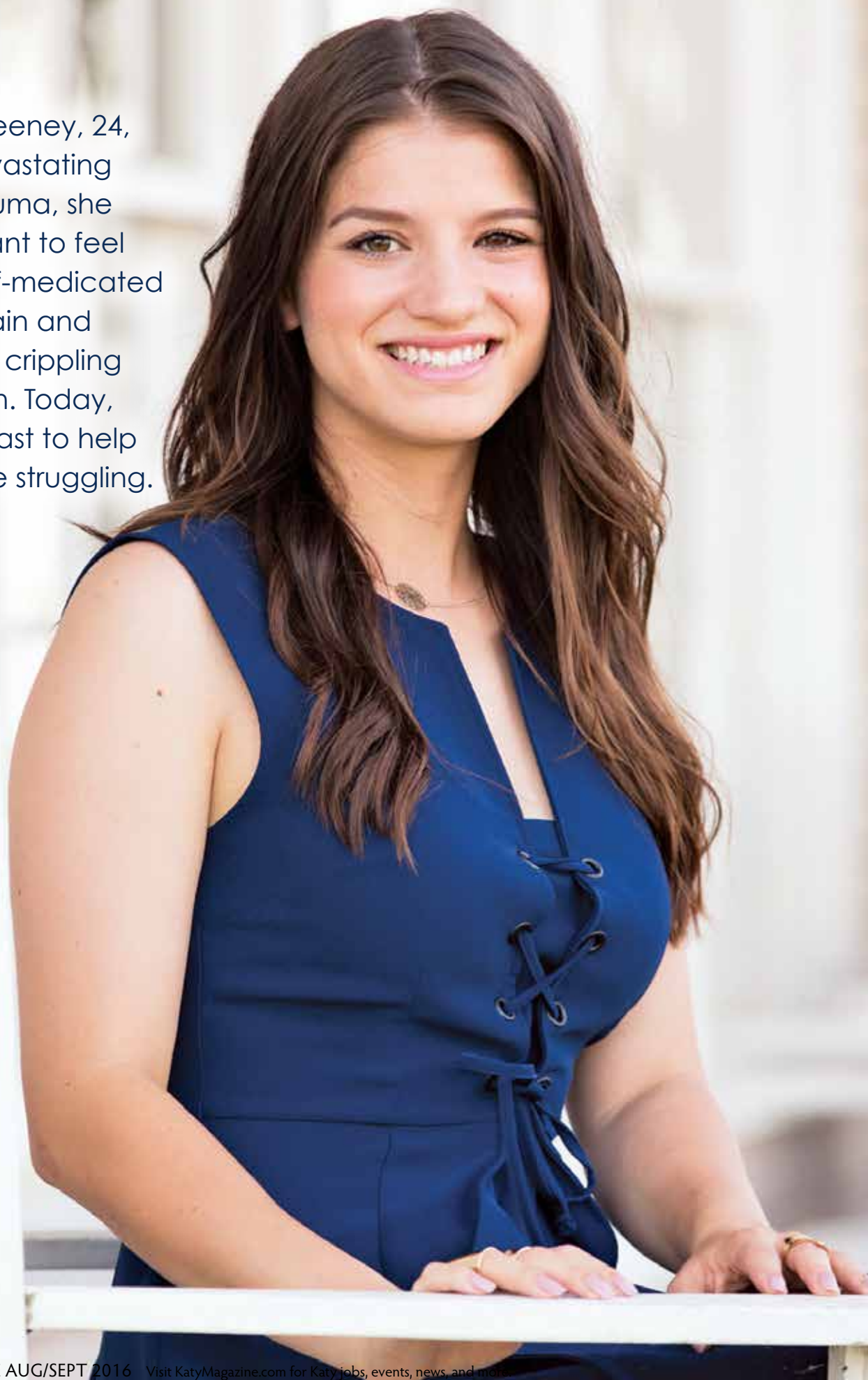


When Olivia Feeney, 24, suffered a devastating childhood trauma, she didn't ever want to feel again. She self-medicated to ease the pain and spiraled into a crippling drug addiction. Today, she uses her past to help others who are struggling.



FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

Written by Olivia Feeney | Photography by Reinaldo Medina

Growing up I was very fortunate. My dad had a successful roofing and siding business; I went to private school; I did competitive cheerleading. I had everything a girl could want. Then something happened that would change my life.

LOSS OF INNOCENCE

When I was 9 years old, I was molested by a close family friend. That situation took my purity away, my innocence, security, and safety. That same day I told my mother what happened to me; I didn't quite understand but I knew something was wrong. A year later I went to court. It was a hung jury; they said they needed more evidence. They wanted a retrial six months later but I said no. It was so embarrassing to have to tell the story in full detail in front of all those people. I was only 10 years old. I felt disgusting, ugly, and ashamed. That opened the door to being tormented with the question, "What's wrong with me?" Anger grew rapidly internally and shame was deeply rooted.

LIFE AT HOME

My parents' relationship didn't make it any better. My brother and I saw and experienced things no kid should have to go through. They only stayed together because they didn't want us to deal with a divorced lifestyle. I hated going home. It was one parent versus the other, but they pretended like everything was normal and I learned to do the same. From the outside, "The Feeneys" always had it together - beach house, nice cars, nice clothes, and I was a social butterfly. No one knew the void in my heart I was constantly trying to fill or the battles I was fighting.

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

I was able to cope with the molestation by being an overachiever in everything. I always had to be the best, to be recognized. In the middle of my sophomore year in high school, I transferred from private school to public school and was introduced to partying and drinking the first weekend. It was just a social thing at first, but escalated fast. I remember thinking, "This is it, this is my escape." I wasn't drinking to have a good time; I was drinking to forget the past and reality.

Junior year I started smoking marijuana and senior year I was taking and trying pretty much anything handed to me. It got to the point where I was high almost every day at school. I would smoke before first period and during lunch time. I deceived my parents and had the "daughter dearest" facade so I was able to manipulate them for money.

LOSING EVERYTHING

After graduation I moved to College Station for school. The following summer my dad had a stroke and I had to move back home to help my mom. I began bartending and working a full-time job. My dad lost his business, we lost our house, and everything spiraled so quickly. I was 18 and all of a sudden everything was taken away. My parents finally separated. We put my dad in an assisted living home and he started drinking again after 17 years sober. That devastated me.

I became addicted to anti-anxiety pills. I got in trouble with the law multiple times, from a minor consumption, possession of marijuana, to probation for a year for a DWI. After I got off probation things got worse. I was taking Molly (or Ecstasy), Xanax, hydrocodone, and more. I hit a lot of bottoms, but somehow couldn't get sober. I didn't want to feel anything or face the truth about myself. I did so many things I wasn't proud of; I hurt a lot of people. My word meant nothing. I was selfish and I lost sight of who I was. I was my own worst enemy.

MY NEW LIFE

One night I was out with some old friends and we got pulled over by the police. We had illegal substances on us, but God allowed the police to give me grace. I remember telling God, "You saved me yet another time, and I'm done Lord!" I was sick of living in a circle of insanity and trying to do my life my way. The next day I came across the resale shop Help a Sista Out in Brookshire. They told me about the refuge center for women who want to get their lives together. They prayed for me and my heart completely melted out of its hard shell and I started crying. I was finally broken, which was a beautiful place to be. On December 28, 2014 I moved into New Birth Ministries to surrender my life to Jesus and began my new journey with him; my new beginning.

Olivia with her pastor at New Birth Ministries, Beverly Vaughn



More About New Birth Ministries

This is a women's shelter for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Women from ages 18 and up are welcome. Call 281-375-2444 or email newbirthwomensrefuge@gmail.com.

A HEART FOR BROKEN WOMEN

I can't keep my old friends in my new life. If any of them reach out for help, which happens every so often, I'm here for them. But I don't try to open doors that aren't supposed to be reopened. I needed a life detox and that's exactly what God did. He reconciled me and my family's relationship and healed my heart. My entire family is a part of New Birth Ministries now. He placed me in a safe place under a powerful woman of God, my pastor Beverly Vaughn. God used her and her team to lead me down the right path and taught me how to be a woman of integrity. It's an honor to have her guide me and push me to be my best.

After one year, I graduated from the program and joined the staff. God has given me a new heart for broken women. I want Him to continue to use me to impact their lives and let them know sobriety can be obtained through the power of God. My advice to anyone out there who is hurting, lonely, angry, and tired: If you truly want your life to change, admit you can't do this on your own, and confess that Jesus Christ is your personal Lord and Savior. **KM**

EDITOR'S NOTE: Katy Magazine would like to thank Olivia for sharing her story and bringing hope to others who may be struggling.

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