

Jennifer Cervantes-Barrios

Jennifer is a junior at Service High School. She loves to volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club, has donated to Big Brothers Big Sisters and other shelters. Jennifer enjoys spending time with her family, rock climbing, snowboarding, camping, fishing, and white water rafting. She is interested in traveling, learning about new cultures, and meeting new people.

Jennifer tries to be friends with everyone and does not judge a book by its cover. She gets to know everyone and anyone for who they are, not by what people say they are. She has empowered women by attending women's conventions in Anchorage, and walking in breast cancer walks in the community.

When Jennifer was 14 years old, her mother got deported. With her mother gone, Jennifer had to drop out of high school in her freshman year to care for her baby brother who was less than a year old. Jennifer also struggles with stress and depression that has affected her physical and emotional health to the point of self-harm and suicide. Jennifer writes, "Ever since everything happened with my mom, I have been depressed and very angry with myself because I blame myself for what happened..."

Jennifer writes, "the ways I have overcome these obstacles was just to notice that everything happens for a reason and that I should just focus on what I want to do when I get out of school. All I can do is get the help I need, focus on my future, also help out my father with whatever he needs, and also help out my mother in any way I possibly can. Before I realized all this, I used to just cry all the time and I was always depressed and angry. Don't get me wrong—I am still that way, but some words I say to myself when I am down are 'whatever makes you fall the hardest/hurts you the most, is what makes you stronger.'"

