

Chelsea is changing lives. And so can you.



On December 15, 2008, in the quiet suburban town of Buffalo Grove, Illinois, the bright future of a young man was cut tragically short. Alex Laliberte overdosed on heroin at a young age and died before anyone knew the degree of his misuse. It was this thought that drove Alex's sister, Chelsea, to take action.



"I was only 23 when Alex died, and losing him just shifted everything for me," said Chelsea. "I felt helpless; I was overwhelmed by an intense desire to learn as much as I could about drugs and substance use disorder, and connect with as many people as possible. So that's exactly what I started doing."

Equipped with an undergraduate degree in integrated marketing communications from Roosevelt University, Chelsea parlayed her corporate experience as a marketing professional to found **Live4Lali**, Inc.—a nonprofit organization focused on raising awareness and educating communities about substance use, use disorder and overdose prevention. Chelsea's accomplishments as an activist and newly minted non-profit director are further enhanced by her work with the Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy and on legislation implementation such as the Good Samaritan Law and the Overdose Prevention Act.

According to Chelsea, substance use disorder (commonly known as addiction)—especially opiate use—is not a criminal issue. It's a health issue. It is a treatable disease with wide-ranging effects on both the individual user, as well as his or her loved ones. Prolonged substance use can lead to a variety of problems—from heart disease and homelessness to dependency and death. "I watched my brother slowly lose himself," she shared, "and while it's too late to help him, I can still help others like him."





Alex and Chelsea's Mother and Alex Laliberte

Fueled by her passion to honor Alex's memory, Chelsea decided to advance her understanding of substance use disorder and mental health by pursuing a graduate degree in social work. "I looked at a lot of schools," she recalled. "I wanted a program that would allow my schedule flexibility, and I thought an online option would be a great fit. I set my sights on Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences."



When asked about her selection, Chelsea noted, "I didn't want to go to just any school. I wanted to go to the best school for social work. I even remember my contacts in the industry telling me: if you could get into Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School that would be amazing."

After some research and a few phone conversations with Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School, Chelsea was certain she'd found the right program. Not only was the Mandel School home to an industry-elite faculty from whom she could learn, but it also offered some of the best field education opportunities in the country. Chelsea remarked, "I realized that by choosing Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School, I could receive more than my master's in social work. I could receive the guidance and support to reach my goals, build a career and define my future."

Today, Chelsea Laliberte is a current student in the online Master of Science in Social Administration program. "In the years since Alex's death, I have made it my mission to promote drug education, and prevention of use and overdose," she said. "He's the reason I started Live4Lali; he's the reason I'm in the social services field; and he's the reason I became an advocate for change."

Now, thanks to the education I am receiving at Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School and the guidance provided by the faculty and my Field Education Instructor, Diane Geiser—who runs her own counseling practice and works with the U.S. Navy—I have the skills, confidence and credentials to honor Alex's memory in one of the most remarkable ways possible—as a social worker."

Chelsea Laliberte is a student in the Online Master of Science in Social Administration program. Connect with Chelsea at Live4Lai.org.