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## Beth: a story of renewed hope

Beth arrived at Orchard Place on a hot August afternoon. She was 15 and did not want to be there. She really didn't want to be anywhere. She was failing in school, self-mutilating, scared and in denial. She had run away numerous times, hung with a wild crowd, and cared little about anything. She didn't get along with her parents and had made things worse by making false accusations against her stepdad. Simply put, life was just not working very well.

When Beth arrived at Orchard Place, she was greeted by Sandy at Kenyon House, her new home. The other Kenyon House kids were in school already, and Sandy devoted the afternoon to getting her settled. She showed her around and assured her that she would not be judged here, that everyone just wanted her to succeed.

Surprising even herself, Beth soon became attached to everyone. She found Orchard Place School quite different from what she was used to. The small classrooms and individual attention worked for her and so did her favorite teacher, Miss Harris. In fact, Miss Harris reminded Beth of her grandmother. She cared about her students, and was fun to joke with and to be around. She made learning fun. Beth's grades improved quickly.

About 6 months into her stay at Orchard Place Beth received a letter from her oldest stepsister in which she expressed her true feelings about Beth and the hurt she had caused her family. She indicated she wanted to sever their relationship and have nothing more to do with Beth. Her sister had always been someone Beth had looked up to. Despite the troubles her sister had in her own life, she had succeeded in school, gotten good grades and was driven to achieving her goals. The letter was a wake up call. Her sister had always been a role model to her, and she was now telling Beth that she didn't even consider Beth her sister. It was a deep hurt. Beth was convinced that she must do something more. She realized she must step up her efforts and take charge of her treatment. She knew that she had to make a commitment to change before anything could happen. She became more focused and determined. She opened up more to her therapist and became more actively involved in her treatment.

At Orchard Place Beth found new hope for a better life. It was tough being at Orchard Place and being away from everyone and everything she knew. But Beth adjusted. She credits Sean, her therapist, for much of her success. Sean helped her reestablish relationships with her father, doing therapy over the phone when he couldn't come to Des Moines. *"Nobody, no one, and no treatment has ever connected with me with way Sean did. She was able to get in my head and understand what I was dealing with. She did amazing things with me and my dad. My dad usually shuts down, but Sean was able to get him to talk. I don't know how she did it, but I'm so thankful she did."*

Now, five years later, Beth has graduated high school and is enrolled in college. She is pursuing a degree in elementary education. Her dream is to be a teacher like Miss Harris, and to inspire kids who are struggling not to give up on hope. She is convinced that if she can succeed, so can other young people if given the guidance and understanding that she received at Orchard Place. She would like to teach at a facility like Orchard Place and connect with kids like the teachers there connected with her. *"I want to show kids that if I can do it, so can they!"*